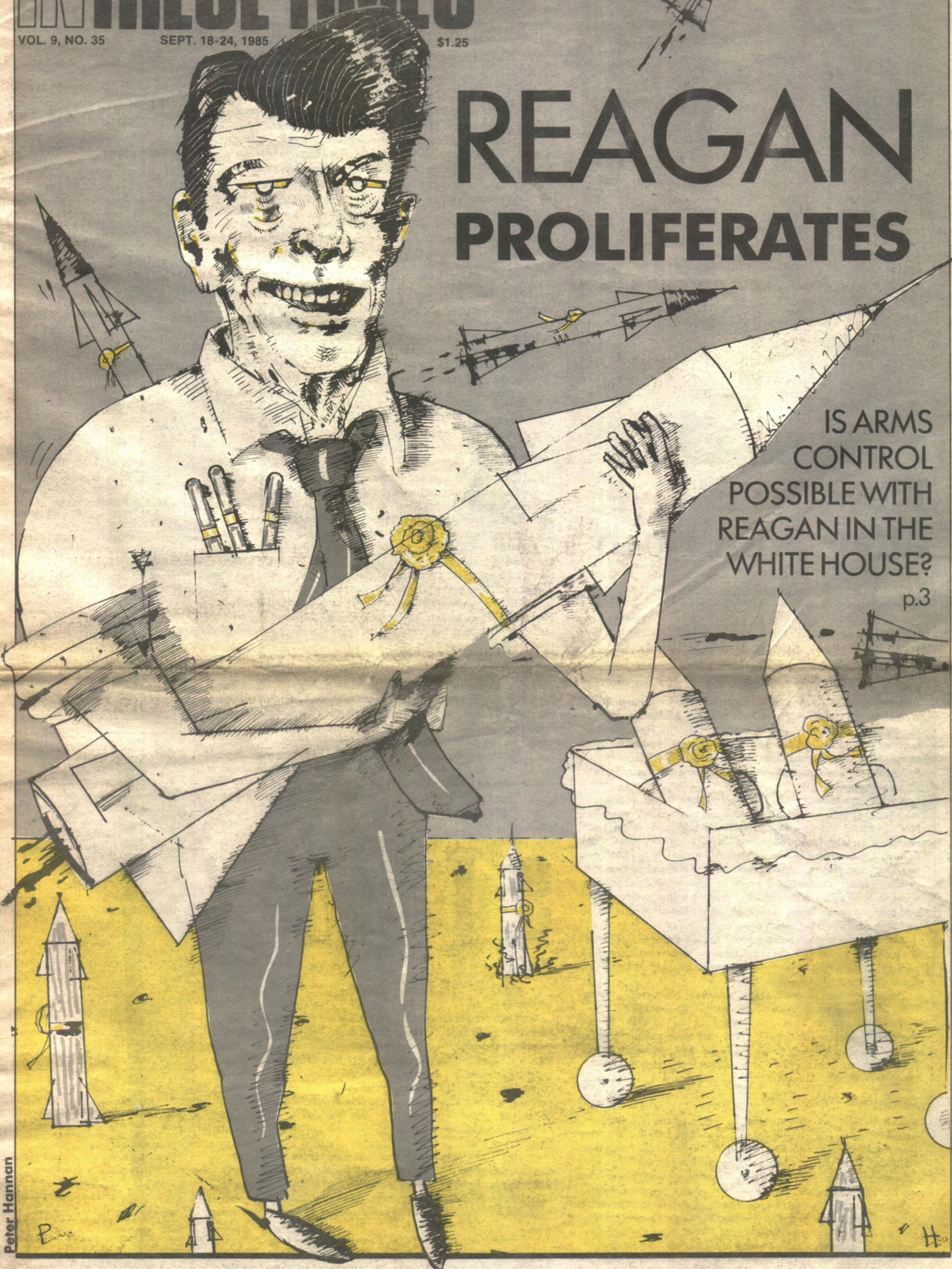


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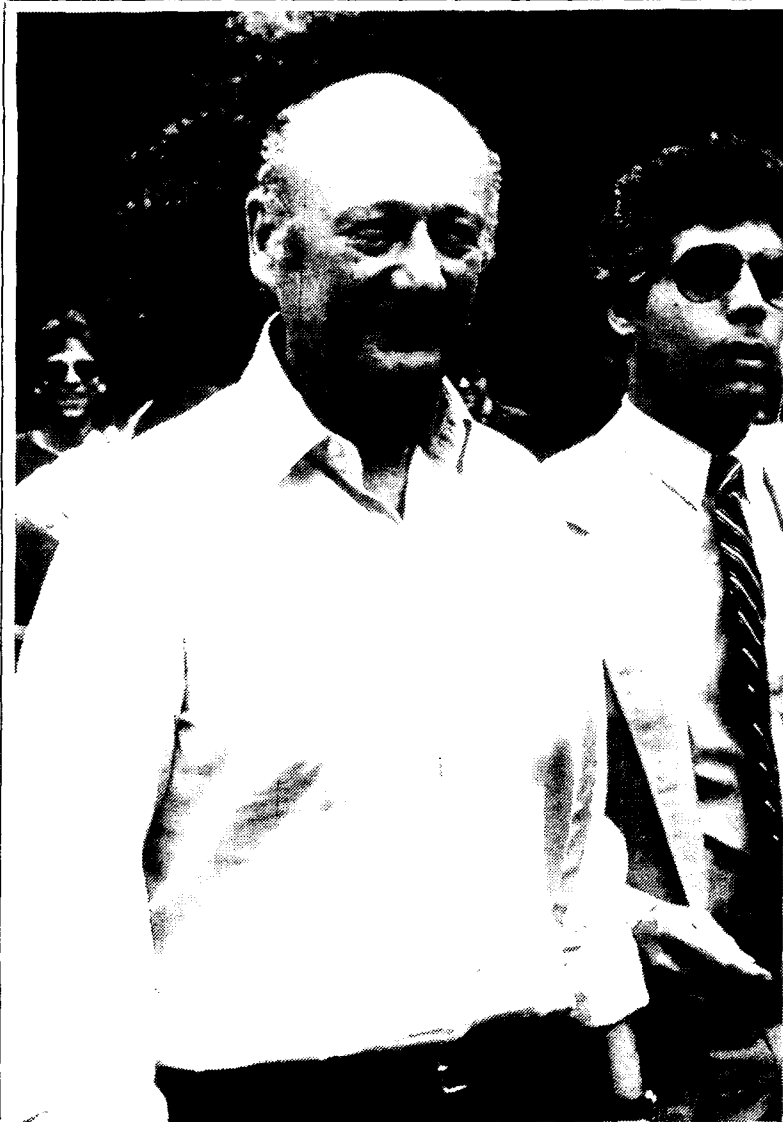


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# New Yorks' love affair with Koch

By Jim Sleeper

NEW YORK

"The more he mellows," said former New York Gov. Hugh Carey of Ed Koch, "the better he gets." In the wake of the mayor's landslide victory in New York's Democratic primary last week, it almost seems Koch and his critics have learned to live with—if not actually love—one another.

But whether the mayor or his detractors have "mellowed" is unclear, for the volatile Koch was kept virtually under wraps during the campaign by his media consultant David Garth. He forbade all but one television debate and even kept the candidate out of his own commercials. They tended instead to feature minority community figures and deputy commissioners extolling the administration's accomplishments.

Koch's opponents, meanwhile, sparked none of the interest managed even by similarly under-funded past mayoral challengers like Norman Mailer and conservative State Senator John Marchi. Koch raised and spent more than \$6 million, City Council President Carol Bellamy one-tenth that and Assemblyman Herman Denny Farrell even less. That money isn't everything was reflected in the labor-intensive petition-gathering that began the race, before many dollars had been spent. Bellamy gathered only about as many signatures as two of the odd-ball splinter candidates in the race, despite her name recognition and eight years in the Council presidency.

Why was the opposition so tepid? Why did Bellamy and Farrell draw only 32 percent of the vote (Bellamy 19 percent, Farrell 12 percent), less than the 36 percent garnered by Brooklyn Assemblyman Frank Barbaro against Koch in 1981?

The answer reflects a sea change in how New Yorkers are viewing their city and its governance 10 years after the shocks and recriminations of the fiscal crisis. Koch's unmatched ability to ride the swift, unsparing currents of a new corporate consolidation, and to give plausible meaning to the hardships they impose on so many New Yorkers, makes him the master of a fitful consensus about the city's development whose triumph is even broader than his own.

## Corporate complexity

In a city whose employment base, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, is shifting faster than anywhere else in the country from manufacturing to corporate services, the facile assumption that "left-out" minorities are inherently oppositional or "progressive" floundered on Koch's strong 38 percent showing among blacks (close to Farrell's 40 percent) and 70 percent among Hispanics.

Returns from minority neighborhoods as diverse as impoverished Brownsville in Brooklyn and middle-class Flushing in Queens confirmed that upwardly aspiring minority voters—from the church-going working poor to the home-owning professionals—accept the disciplines of the new corporate dispensation whose master teacher Koch has become. Most of those struggling to start small businesses or make it through the technical schools and community colleges have little problem with most of what the mayor says or does.

Then, too, the city's minorities are more ethnically and culturally heterogeneous than the would-be champions of an anti-Koch, black-Latino alliance acknowledged. Hispanics, who comprise 15 percent of the city's voters, include transient Puerto Ricans, entrepreneurial Dominicans, politically conservative Cubans and newly registered recent immigrants from half a dozen other major Latin American

countries.

Unlike Chicago or Atlanta, in New York blacks comprise only 25 percent of the Democratic vote, and even that is sharply divided between Southern U.S. blacks and a burgeoning Caribbean population that includes more than 300,000 West Indians in Brooklyn alone. Chinatown, meanwhile, has burst its bounds as big new Asian communities, often led by entrepreneurial Koreans and Indians, take over whole neighborhoods in Queens. It's possible to have immigrated to one of these communities five years ago and to have become a voter without ever having heard of the city's 1975 fiscal crisis, and possible not to care even if one has, assuming that one's reference point is Taipei, Port au Prince or Bombay.

Koch has turned none of his polarizing remarks against these newcomers, many of whom have such difficult relations with the American black community—whose history they don't understand—that they're likely to be on Koch's side of any polarization. Even when former Deputy Mayor Herman Badillo seemed, early in the campaign, to be the anti-Koch champion of an interracial coalition, the Institute for Puerto Rican Policy found surprisingly soft support for him among Hispanic voters.

Of course, long-time minority New Yorkers who are structurally excluded from the city's new economy tend not to vote at all. It's one thing to turn out for a Jesse Jackson, and another to do so for a Carol Bellamy or a Denny Farrell, neither of whom could pose credible alternatives to the real estate and professional service economy in which their own core supporters are so deeply invested. Everyone knows, if only because everyone was repeatedly told, that the mayor is a competent municipal manager struggling with political and economic constraints that "aren't his fault." And neither Bellamy nor Farrell managed to escape the appearance of managerial "me tooism" which left unchallenged Koch's basic assumptions about the direction of urban development. Add to this the fact that crime is down slightly, even though the city's population is growing again, and that the local unemployment rate (7.6 percent) is the lowest of any major American city, and you have a pattern that became an advantage in the mayor's TV commercials.

## Civic decay?

Never mind that the apparent upturn in the city's economy masks a widening gap between the privileged and the poor, or that Manhattan is fast becoming the kind of luxury (some would say decadent) imperial compound whose future may be foretold in the history of others like it in ages past. Never mind that just when the city ought to be keeping faith with its new wave of immigrants and older immigrants from the South and Puerto Rico, the lion's share of its public resources is being removed from schools and mass transit and put into the Westway boondoggle, sanitized Rouse tourist developments like the South Street Seaport and hotels like John Portman's ugly new Marriott Marquis in Times Square. The accompanying changes in the civic culture are troubling, but Fantasy Island's genial director manages to straddle the contradictions.

The *New York Times*, fresh from sacking its left-leaning city columnist Sydney Schanberg, dubbed Koch "the restaurant mayor" in touting his famed culinary eclecticism as evidence of his ability to "represent New Yorkers of every persuasion and the city's taste for variety." For some, the endorsement called to mind Koch's emergency personal appearance, with the appropriate commissioners in tow, to o.k. the opening of an expensive new Cajun restaurant whose certification had been delayed by the bureaucracy, while Bellamy swept out to the slums of East New York to express solidarity with squatters in city-foreclosed buildings the housing agency had sealed as unfit for

# THE STORY INSIDE

occupancy.

Yet Koch's opponents muffed the issue of the civic culture. What they denounced as the mayor's "divisiveness" is, to most voters, including minorities, his strong projection of authority against "under-class" rebellion and civic decay. Some of that decay actually begins higher up the social ladder in the self-absorption of the city's new corporate middle class. But Koch's challengers seemed no more inclined than he to assail vices that the privileged now share with the poor—the spread of pornography, easy promiscuity—at least until herpes and AIDS—drug abuse and even the gambling that the state lottery promotes.

Parents who send their children out daily to run the gauntlet of these threats got scant reassurance from any of the candidates, who embodied both the new middle-class confusion about values and liberalism's inherent incapacity to impose a moral code to save itself from dissolution amid deepening inequities that demean rich and poor alike.

It seems the fate of New York City to throw these economic and cultural traditions into sharpest relief, and of its office-seekers to straddle them in order to win. No one does that as well as the mayor, and, as Hugh Carey suggests, he gets better at it all the time.

The restaurant mayor's fancy dancing is no solution, of course, for those who attribute some of the city's worst problems to the new corporate dispensation the mayor champions so well. But if his opponents seem also to have "mellowed" this year, maybe it's because they realize that while Koch clouds his claim that one can be "a liberal with sanity," the voters seem to understand that there cannot be "socialism in one city."

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# Reagan's proliferation politics

By Diana Johnstone

GENEVA

**J**UST ABOUT EVERYONE WHO IS PAYING attention is convinced that the Reagan administration is going for strategic superiority, including nuclear first-strike capability against the USSR, and will not let mere arms control stand in its way. This confronts peace movements, as well as the non-nuclear weapons states (NNWS) currently attending the third five-year review of the nuclear weapons non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) here in Geneva, with a constant diplomatic problem: how much to cater to the fiction that the U.S. seriously wants disarmament.

Inga Thorsson, the Swedish chair of the first treaty review 10 years ago, told an international freeze movement conference in Geneva that there can be "no progress" on a freeze, much less disarmament, "so long as the present U.S. administration exists." It was necessary to look "10 years ahead," she said, hoping that humanity might survive that long.

"Everyone knows which nuclear power is acting in disobedience to Article VI," she said. This is the article of the NPT promising: "Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

The convention these days seems to be to direct criticism of U.S. policy at "the superpowers," apparently in the hope that the implied equal criticism of the USSR will stave off American wrath. This showed up at the freeze meeting, when a Brazilian diplomat, in the presence of an American diplomat, was asked by a peace activist whether he thought the U.S. was serious about arms negotiation. There was suspense. Would the Brazilian dare be honest? His answer: none of the superpowers is serious now about arms negotiation."

But that even-handedness does not reflect what the world is actually thinking. It leads even well-informed, well-intentioned people to say things that are not quite accurate when, for instance, they refer to the "on-going nuclear tests of the superpowers," ignoring the fact that the Soviet Union is currently observing a unilateral five-month moratorium on all nuclear arms tests. This is a moratorium that could become permanent if only the U.S. would also halt nuclear weapons testing before the Soviet moratorium runs out next January. This would set the stage for negotiations of a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty (CTB). The nuclear arms race would be stopped. Disarmament negotiations could begin.

For years, peace movements have been calling on either of the nuclear superpowers to make a significant unilateral gesture. The Soviet "no first use" pledge was considered just words, and the moratorium on Soviet missile deployment too little and too late. But the unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing begun by Gorbachev on August 6 is different. Thorsson called it the "only significant move since SALT," and this view is widely shared.

Yet, paradoxically, peace movements are not using the Gorbachev moratorium to put pressure on the Reagan administration to follow suit, as if they were afraid to point to a positive Soviet move and be accused of pro-Soviet leanings. The NNWS, especially the non-aligned countries, are trying to use the review to tell the nuclear superpowers to live up to Article VI by negotiating a comprehensive test ban (CTB).

Colin Hines of Greenpeace, which has been especially active around the NPT, told

the freeze meeting that proliferation "is one of the few things the nuclear powers are somewhat concerned about. They don't want the NPT to collapse. We've decided to use it to lobby for a CTB." Hines pointed out that the practical problems in a comprehensive test ban treaty were all ironed out in 1979, before the U.S. broke off negotiations. It could be concluded quickly "if the political will is there."

Since it isn't, Hines, like Thorsson, was looking ahead to 1995, when the NPT will have to be reaffirmed.

The difficulty of using the NPT review to put pressure on Washington is that the Reagan administration is evidently much less concerned about the dangers of nuclear proliferation than it is eager to go ahead with its own arms program, notably Star Wars, which will entail lots of testing.

## False scare

In some ways Third World proliferation is a false scare. The overwhelming majority of Third World countries do not seem to want nuclear weapons and are having doubts about the "benefits of peaceful applications of nuclear technology," notably nuclear power plants, which is what they were promised—under supervision, of

not they are "ready" for something so civilized—is a smokescreen and a diversion. The looming question is what the nuclear industry decides to do with its breeder reactors and increasing supplies of plutonium.

All this means that the NNWS, notably the non-aligned countries, have little clout against the U.S., which has little to fear from their eventual threats to walk out of the NPT. Nevertheless, they are using the review conference to voice their demand for an end to the nuclear arms race, and in particular for a CTB.

The U.S. dismisses all these demands by harping on two themes: verification and reduction.

"It is simply wrong—a lie—to say verification of a freeze would be difficult," Frank Barnaby, former director of SIPRI (the authoritative Stockholm International Peace Research Institute), told the freeze meeting in Geneva. The superpowers and Sweden are today monitoring all underground nuclear tests and know it can be done.

Barnaby said the following elements would add up to a freeze:

- A comprehensive test ban. A CTB would prevent new arms development in the U.S. and the USSR, and help stop the

tice Soviet but not American).

Barnaby also recounted that the Americans, who are better than the Russians at triggering low-yield nuclear explosions, have suggested a threshold at about 20 kilotons, too low for the Russians to be able to get under it easily. American weapons designers, on the other hand, are mainly interested in perfecting low-yield nuclear weapons.

Indeed, the vast U.S. arms modernization underway involves miniaturizing many nuclear weapons and getting rid of old obsolete ones. So when American officials speak of arms "reduction" (the better to reject a mere freeze), skeptics can suspect that they are thinking in terms of substituting the "qualitative" arms race (small, sophisticated war-fighting weapons) for the "quantitative" arms race (big, massive deterrence weapons).

## Official U.S. line

The freeze meeting was treated to a sample of the official U.S. approach by Mary Elizabeth Hoinkes, senior adviser to the U.S. delegation at the NPT review in Geneva and a very smooth diplomat. Not surprisingly, she harped on verification: a CTB is "not the place to start right now." First, verification problems must be solved. "We believe in starting with the hardest problems first," she said. No matter how many tests are detected, there always *might* be tests you cannot detect, she suggested. As she put it, the problems sounded not



course—in return for signing the NPT. The NNWS party to the NPT rightly claim they have been cheated. They have got nothing for signing the NPT except the right to complain to the nuclear powers every five years at the review conference.

Nuclear technology and material have been exported to countries that have not formally renounced nuclear weapons by signing the NPT for "essentially commercial rather than political" motives, claimed Nigerian Ambassador Bariyu Adeyemi, "particularly at a time when the nuclear industry is facing serious economic problems." The Nigerian noted that "international efforts to stop the spread of nuclear weapons are now being systematically endangered by commercial pressures."

In short, there is indeed a danger of "horizontal" proliferation of nuclear weapons spreading to more countries and even to private groups, criminals or terrorists. But it comes from the nuclear powers themselves, plus the advanced industrial countries without nuclear arsenals but with nuclear power technology, intent on exporting a technology that will put the opportunity to build an atomic bomb within the reach of practically everyone in the world. The question, "Will the Third World countries decide they want nuclear weapons?"—with the accompanying debate as to whether or

"qualitative" nuclear arms race leading to first-strike capability. Second, it would stop "confidence testing" (of old weapons to see if they still work) that in time would prevent their use. Third, it would hinder horizontal proliferation by inhibiting new countries from testing (Pakistan is considered next).

- A ballistic missile test ban.
- A fissile material cut-off—an agreement not to produce plutonium and uranium for military purposes.

The CTB, Barnaby said, is the most urgent and essential. It should be permanent and have no threshold (that is, a level of explosive power below which the ban would not apply). Any threshold would be an open invitation to perfect low-yield weapons. The reason given for wanting a threshold is the difficulty of verification, but this is wrong, according to Barnaby. The Swedish, who are experienced, would say that even the smallest tests can be verified—even yields below one kiloton. "The demand for verification is used to hide the lack of political will," Barnaby stressed.

A chemical weapon ban has also been blocked by "absurd and extravagant verification demands" on the part of the U.S., he noted (U.S. negotiators insist on inspection of state-owned, but not privately-owned, chemical plants, meaning in prac-

only hard but unsolvable, like proving the non-existence of something one can't find.

"We think the most effective thing to do is to reduce nuclear arsenals," the American diplomat said. A freeze would be a "side-track" from that effort, a diversion. "We have come to the conclusion that pursuing reductions is the way to get a handle on a process," she concluded vaguely.

At the NPT review, the U.S. and Britain were soon isolated in their opposition to a CTB. The U.S. wants to test its Star Wars weapons and Britain wants to test Trident. (The two nuclear powers that never signed the NPT, France and China, also oppose a test ban. France is busy testing the neutron bomb in the South Pacific.)

What was surprising was to hear Sen. John Kerry (D-MA), apparently the white knight of the American freeze movement, also stress verification in his speech to the international freeze conference in Geneva. After some welcome words on the danger of the nuclear arms race, he jumped over the CTB to propose "that the two superpowers could make no greater or significant contribution to the cause of arms control today, or in the decades ahead, *than to resolve to meet on an urgent basis to reach a bilateral accord on verification.*" (His underlining.) This would "place us squarely

*Continued on page 22*







By Mark Erlich

BOSTON

**I**N THE MIDST OF THE GREATEST EROSION of building trades union power since the '20s, the head of a large building firm cannot understand the absence of a well-organized labor response: "When I was a young man and first starting out, the unions were fighting hard for recognition and they would not tolerate anything like this. But today...." he says, trailing off.

The word "concessions" entered the public scene regularly in 1980, but construction workers have heard it for a decade. As early as 1975-76, union carpenters, bricklayers, plumbers and laborers accepted wage cuts and freezes, and started a downhill slide. Employer appetites for concessions only increased. Building contractors in Houston, for example, won a freeze in 1983, a 15 percent cut in 1984, and asked for another 15 percent cut this year. Union crafts workers averaged .5 percent pay hikes in 1984—lower than any other U.S. industry and the lowest in construction in 40 years.

And 1985 has brought more of the same. According to Robert Gasperow, executive director of the employer-financed Construction Labor Research Council, "The most commonly negotiated settlement [in the first half of 1985] was a one-year wage-and-fringe freeze." And, while 15 years ago, union building trades workers erected roughly 80 percent of all new construction, today, the figure is closer to 35 percent.

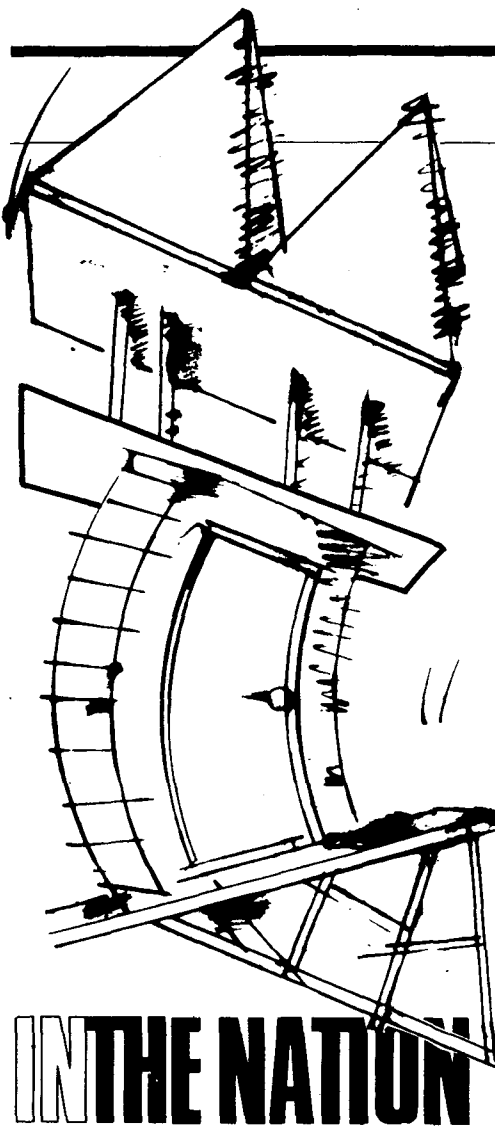
The collapse of the building boom of the '60s laid the groundwork for today's crisis. The national unemployment rate for construction workers has been in double digits since the mid-'70s and has often topped 20 percent. Contractors have used the slowdown to open negotiations in once sacred areas. Employers have won the right to hire more semi-skilled and lower-paid apprentices and helpers to break up the power and authority of the skilled craft worker. In some places, construction union locals are little more than numbers in the telephone book and the mythical over-paid hardhat is pressed to stay in the same tax bracket as the average factory worker.

Such "open shop" operations now dominate the construction industry. The Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC), once a comfortable haven for a handful of non-union homebuilders and medium-sized commercial contractors, has expanded more than 800 percent since 1969. The Associated General Contractors (AGC), once limited to union employers, has opened its arms to open-shop firms and offers seminars to unionized members, outlining paths to a "union-free environment."

Management consultants and attorneys, working independently or through the ABC and AGC, have shown union contractors an ingenious new tactic. They advise builders to set up dummy corporations in their own names or that of a family member. Despite overlapping payrolls, suppliers, office space and even telephones, these separate legal entities have freed builders to ignore existing contracts with the unions. Using this practice of "double-breasting," contractors (in their non-union guise) can and do pay employees lower wages and save on contractually negotiated fringe benefits, work rules and safety provisions.

Amazingly, this strategy has won legal sanction in court challenges. Although some judges have ruled that legitimate double-breasted status requires "maximum separation of operations," in practice these niceties are overlooked. Workers are sometimes offered a choice of transferring to the employer's non-union counterpart or standing in the unemployment line. Superintendents rush back and forth from union to non-union job, while company drivers casually place magnetic signs with the non-union name over the union logo painted on their trucks.

Remaining union contractors are abandoning the traditional multi-employer bargaining groups, often preferring to sign agreements on a job-by-job basis at their convenience. Only after winning a \$276 million hydroelectric bid in California did Guy Atkinson Construction negotiate a special



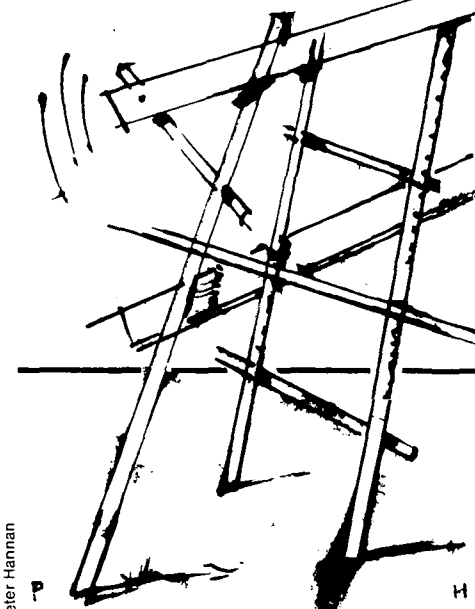
## IN THE NATION

project agreement in April. Faced with an employer with contract already in hand, the unions had no bargaining leverage. They accepted four-and-a-half years' of wage freezes and weakened work rules. As *Engineering News-Record* recently editorialized: "Such a trend would not have to advance very far for collective bargaining to mean nothing in the construction industry."

### Fighting back

Construction unions acknowledge the current crisis. Most have been discussing organizing proposals for several years, and some have active organizing departments. A few well-financed and publicized multi-trade projects have been set up in Houston, Los Angeles and other areas. The approach has usually been top-down: Organizers plead with builders to sign union contracts, offering extensive concessions to sweeten the deal; union staffers rarely visit job-sites to sign up unorganized workers.

Tom Owens, who oversees organizing activities for the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department (BCTD), defends this strategy by suggesting that "our only hope is to keep union contractors



competitive with the non-union companies."

New terms have been added to bargaining language in areas with high employment and a continued union presence. Carpenters in Southern California struck for four months to win a provision requiring all general contractors to use unionized subcontractors. In Boston, carpenters and bricklayers took advantage of a \$6 billion building boom to attack double-breasted contractors directly. Their current contracts include work-preservation clauses stipulating that subsidiaries of any employer who has signed the agreement must likewise abide by its terms. Andy Silins of the Bos-

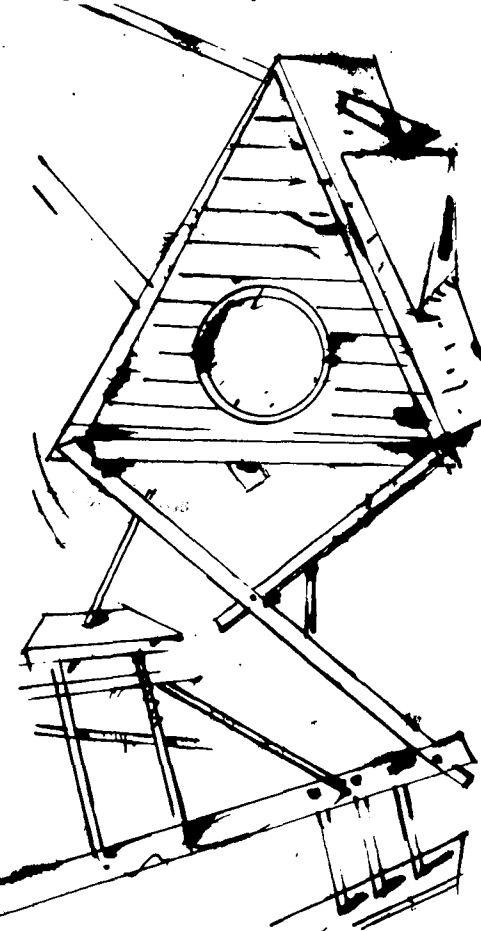
## LABOR

# Construction unions fighting open shop

ton Carpenters District Council reports that the clause has already prompted many contractors to drop their non-union firms and the unions have filed lawsuits against those builders who are reluctant to comply.

Union officers are also now using the building trades' pension funds as a new weapon. This staggering amount of money—expected to top \$100 billion in the '90s—had been left in the hands of investment counsellors and money managers and had frequently financed non-union built real estate developments. Dennis Walton, business representative of Operating Engineers Local 675 in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., claims union members have been unemployed because "we've been loaning the bastards money to build us out of a job."

In California, Florida, Massachusetts and several other states, union trustees have now managed to invest funds in projects with guarantees of 100 percent union labor.



Walton believes the funds have even greater potential "to do what a union is supposed to do—create social and educational benefits for members" such as mortgage programs, car loans and, ultimately, a voice in what should and should not be built based on social need.

At best, these changes protect workers still in the union fold. They are of little help to unorganized workers, currently a clear majority in the construction workforce. And since non-union wages are usually set as a percentage of union scale (anywhere from one-half to two-thirds), pay cuts are less likely to salvage a few union contractors than to drive down the standard of living for all construction workers, union and non-union.

Occasionally there is talk of grassroots organizing. The Sheet Metal Workers in Atlanta have instituted a pilot program in which graduating apprentices spend a year as union organizers before returning to the trade. Michael Lucas, organizer for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), proposes turning back the clock and taking "a look at what the people did who built our unions" when they tried to organize, one at a time, every worker who was part of the industry.

Lucas' call has often been repeated, but rarely carried out. Organizing the unorganized in construction is not easy. Building crews are small and transient. But the long-standing practice of top-down organizing makes it even harder. Construc-

tion unions are just now learning about picketing, newsletters, home visits, certification elections and the other ABCs of organizing campaigns.

### "They don't want us."

Potential recruits, however, mistrust organizing appeals. During a campaign at one of New England's largest electrical contractors, an apprentice muttered, "They just want the work we're doing. They don't want us." The campaign sputtered and ultimately failed. In the end, the representative from the century-old union sighed and honestly admitted, "We're new at this game."

The apprentice voiced a common frustration with construction unions. During the post-WWII era of prosperity, in fact, many union leaders linked their success to the principle of exclusion. By keeping membership down and controlling the limited pool of skilled labor, union negotiators were able to persuade contractors to swallow hefty increases in the midst of a booming economy. The gains of the post-war years cemented an inward-looking focus in the building trades and confirmed the conviction that lining up with the contractors was the most promising road to job security.

Unlike some of the industrial unions or the newer service unions, alternate traditions in construction of mass organizing, rank-and-file activism or identification with other progressive political movements date back beyond most living memories.

While a feeling of crisis pervades all but a handful of remaining union strongholds, many union officials, shackled by their business unionism, can only shake their heads in bewilderment and hope the open shop goes away. In the next decade, industry analysts predict that most of the nation's building will be carried out by workers in non-union firms. Large-scale construction in some major cities and giant projects in outlying areas will continue to be built by union construction workers. A stream of concessions will narrow the gap between the wages and benefits of the two groups of workers and distinctions in working conditions will disappear.

That picture is probable, though not inevitable. But until the unions are prepared to organize everyone who builds, little else matters. Contract language and legislative lobbying will never defeat the open shop; denying non-union contractors access to a supply of labor will. "That's all we have to sell," remarks an IBEW vice president. "That's all we ever had to sell." Even if the unions open their doors, however, non-union construction workers have little incentive to join. With wages dropping and the union share of the overall work dwindling, many open-shop workers view the construction unions as sinking ships.

As non-union operations come to define the nature of the industry, obliterating craft distinctions and introducing hierarchical pay scales, new forms of organization may become more relevant. A single multi-craft construction union—"one army instead of a bunch of battered regiments," as California State Council of Carpenters Executive Secretary-Treasurer Anthony Ramos puts it—may be an idea whose time has arrived.

In the meantime, union and non-union workers face a formidable open-shop movement. "It will not turn around because the unions are going to make it turn around," says Richard Croteau, retired Carpenters' Union business agent from Lawrence, Mass. "It's going to happen the same way that it's always happened. When the people who are working on the non-union job finally say, 'Hey, what we need here is a union,' that's when it will turn around."

**Mark Erlich** is a union carpenter in Boston.



By Laura Fraser

SAN FRANCISCO

**C**LIFFORD JOHNSON, A 35-YEAR-old computer operations specialist at Stanford University, thinks the U.S. is rapidly moving to a point where a computer could start a nuclear war. Believing this to be unconstitutional, he is suing the Defense Department.

The focus of Johnson's suit against Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger is Launch on Warning Capability (LOWC). LOWC is the technology that would enable the U.S. to detect a Soviet nuclear weapon launch in time—about three to 10 minutes—to shoot off automatically U.S. ICBMs before the Soviet missiles hit.

Johnson, who holds a doctorate in operations research from Oxford, began his lawsuit in December 1983 when the U.S. deployed Ground Launched Cruise Missiles near his hometown of London. He said the threat of nuclear war "hit home" to him when he considered that the short flight time of West German Pershing II missiles pointed at the Soviets' SS-20 missiles in East Germany increased the pressure to automate the U.S. decision to retaliate with nuclear weapons. Johnson argues that an automated launch capability would abdicate the authority to declare war to a machine. After studying U.S. law in his

## NUCLEAR POLICY

# Lawsuit against DOD challenges war games

command authority to define thresholds of contingencies within which release of weapons is delegated to the automated system. Examples are release nuclear weapons for defense of own resources, release hit-to-kill weapons if more than 10 boosters are in track and release all nuclear weapons if more than 100 boosters are in track."

And a *New York Times* article last May reported that Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Fred Ikle was devising, along with Canadian officials, a plan that would integrate offensive nuclear forces with Star Wars—joining the "nuclear sword with the antimissile shield."

In a February statement prepared for the Senate, which Johnson cites, Ikle acknowledged that the Star Wars defense would be triggered automatically—it requires that Soviet missiles be destroyed while still over the USSR—and therefore might accidental-

will have the capability soon." He says that although the DOD claims that there's always a human there to press the button, "with such a short flight time, they don't have time to go through communications. The computer says 'launch' and they'll launch."

John Steinbruner, director of foreign policy studies at the Brookings Institution, is not convinced that the Defense Department is considering LOWC. "It is impossible to know the degree to which LOWC is implemented unless you're in the government," he said, acknowledging that an automated firing scheme has been bantered about in theory.

He doesn't agree with either the theory behind LOWC—it would merely make both sides more "trigger-happy"—or its practicality. According to Steinbruner, if the Soviets ever launched missiles the U.S.

you've got a Third World War."

That scenario might not be as far-fetched as it sounds. According to Greg Chapman, executive director of Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility, a 700-member Palo Alto group that supports Johnson's suit, computer mistakes in the past have almost led to all-out nuclear war.

In 1980, for example, NORAD (North American Aerospace Defense Command) computers in Colorado Springs reported that two, then 22, then 222 Soviet missiles were heading toward the U.S. U.S. forces went on nuclear alert, and the engines were running on the bombers when it was discovered that a 46-cent silicon chip had generated a digit "2" instead of a digit "0."

Johnson's case was dismissed in San Francisco U.S. District Court in June when Judge Spencer Williams ruled the complaint was a "political matter" that could only be decided upon by the legislative or executive branches of government.

Johnson persevered, appealing the decision to the Ninth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in San Francisco in early July. Once again, Attorney John Penrose argued that the matter of LOWC was not a decision for the courts.

But one of the three judges presiding, Judge William Norris, questioned Penrose sharply. "I thought the Constitution was clear that only Congress can declare war," he said. Norris also said that the decision to give computers the ability to launch a nuclear attack was "in itself a decision to engage in nuclear war."

Johnson was encouraged by the hearing, although a decision as to whether it will be remanded to the District Court or if he will have to continue to appeal to the Supreme Court is not expected for several weeks. "I started out expecting not to be taken seriously," he says, "and I've been taken very seriously."

**"It's too hard to decide."**

Says Anne Simon of the New York Center for Constitutional Rights, the argument over whether a computer can declare war is "an extremely serious constitutional issue. The abdication of the decision to go to war to a machine is not what the Founding Fathers had in mind."

Simon was lead counsel in the *Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles v. Reagan* case, where several English women, as well as U.S. Reps. Ron Dellums (D-CA) and Ted Weiss (D-NY), sued the U.S. government, claiming that the deployment of American cruise missiles at Greenham Common Air Force Base in England violated constitutional and international law. That case was dismissed because, Simon says, the judge found that the facts were "unmanageable" and the case was not "ripe."

Yet Simon believes that "if any court listened with real ears, it would make a difference." But, she acknowledges, "the circumstance is so new that the legal concepts developed to deal with other less dangerous, less horrifying and more familiar circumstances make Johnson's case look non-judicial."

Daniel Arbess, executive director of the Lawyers's Committee on Nuclear Policy agrees that the problem with Johnson's case is that "technology is outstripping the law," so "when the courts say something is nonjusticiable, they mean it's too hard to decide."

Arbess, who is a lawyer and engineer, says the government's claim that LOWC is a political question doesn't stand up because in the past courts have made other legal determinations with political ramifications, such as decisions on abortion and desegregation. "Every question of public law has a certain political element in it," he said. "The courts are hiding behind doctrines and are not fulfilling their responsibility to uphold the Constitution."

Although Johnson concedes that his chance of winning is probably smaller than the chance of an accidental computer-initiated nuclear launch, he hopes the case will be remanded to District Court, where he says, "we can line up the experts and bring out the facts."

**Laura Fraser is a San Francisco-based freelance writer.**



L.A. Times Syndicate

spare time, Johnson's legal briefs rest on the premise that the Constitution states that "only Congress shall have Power...to declare War."

In the wake of Vietnam, many have debated whether the president has the right to declare war without congressional approval. Yet Johnson isn't questioning whether the president has the right to push the button; rather, he is challenging that the decision be left to a computer. LOWC is so dangerous, according to Johnson, that its very existence should be considered an "act of war."

To Johnson's allegations, the Defense Department responds that it's not developing LOWC. DOD spokesman Maj. Richard Ziegler said, "We do not rely on automated decision-making to make such crucial decisions. We are not on a hair-trigger to launch our missiles."

But Johnson, like others monitoring the arms race, believes LOWC may be in the works. In fact, he claims that the Strategic Defense Initiative, or Star Wars, is based entirely on the LOWC concept.

He cites the 1984 report by the government panel on the computational requirements of Star Wars as evidence of the DOD's intent to automate nuclear weapons. The report said SDI requires "an ability to

## Johnson's suit argues that the Launch on Warning Capability (LOWC) is unconstitutional.

ly execute. Ikle also cautioned that the continued capability to respond to a "massive surprise attack" implied that "computer assessments" would "govern a decision whether to fire these atomic weapons that could destroy the human species."

Less cautious, according to Johnson, was Robert Cooper, director of Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, when he told the Senate in April, "We might have the technology so he [the president] couldn't make a mistake."

Robert Aldridge, a former weapons designer for Lockheed and author of *First Strike*, says that although the Defense Department won't openly admit that they have an automated launch policy, "put the technologies together and you see the U.S.

command system would be so disrupted by the electromagnetic interference that it would render an automated response system useless. Although he believes it would be possible to design a computer of "sufficient reliability" for LOWC, "the probability of failure can never be made zero."

### "One bad chip"

Regardless of whether the DOD has LOWC, Johnson wants the entire concept to be declared unconstitutional. He has spent much of his free time and pocket money preparing his case. "At first everyone thought I was mad, except computer professionals," he said. "But I've got supporters in the anti-nuclear movement, and even at the highest levels of the military. They don't want to salute a machine."

Although Johnson is a British citizen with permanent U.S. residence, he argues that he has the right to sue because LOWC would put his life in jeopardy. And if there were an accidental nuclear war, he would be killed.

"They say the satellites are accurate enough to spot a tennis ball from space," Johnson says. "But one bad chip, and it thinks a tennis ball is a missile. Two bad chips and it thinks it's looking at Moscow when it's looking at Wimbledon—and then



By Joan Walsh

SAN FRANCISCO

**T**HE NATION'S 10 LEADING ENVIRONMENTAL groups made national headlines earlier this year with a joint priorities statement labeling nuclear war "the ultimate environmental threat," and placing its prevention at the top of their agendas for the '80s. But disagreement over how far to go to combat the nuclear threat is dividing the 370,000-member Sierra Club, the activist conservation leader.

The club's board of directors is facing a grassroots campaign to make preventing nuclear war and ending the arms race one of the group's well-funded national priorities. The anti-nuclear forces' tactics have escalated from lobbying and letter-writing to silent vigils at board meetings. But the center of the campaign is a petition drive that could force the matter to a membership vote early next year.

Although the board is on record supporting a host of disarmament proposals as a matter of policy, making anti-nuclear war work a designated club priority—and committing considerable club resources to it—has met resistance. Some leaders believe the issue is too far removed from the group's conservation tradition for the club to have an impact. Others believe the club can work on peace issues effectively without diverting resources from existing campaigns by making the matter a formal priority.

"Members are concerned that we not pull away from our traditional priorities," says Sierra Club President Michele Perrault. "There are different ways of getting at the arms race—you don't have to call it a priority to contribute."

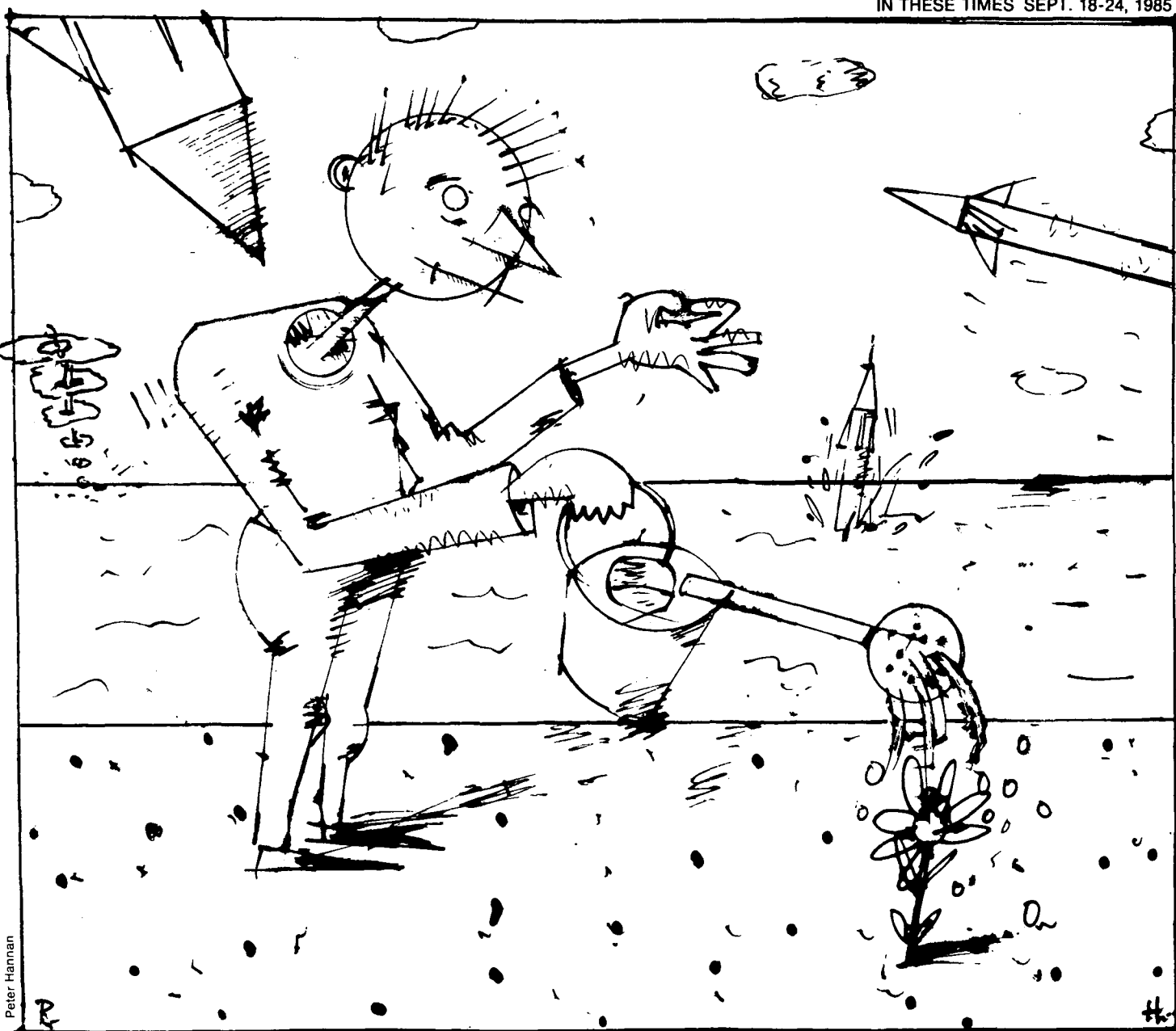
To those who back the petition drive, the matter is stark and simple. "If we don't do something about nuclear war, we don't have to worry about our other issues," says Friends of the Earth chair David Brower, a Sierra Club board member who supports the petition drive. "It's not a question of doing either/or, it's both/and."

By all accounts, the ferment over the club's anti-nuclear involvement began in the Bay Area chapter, the club's second largest (the Angeles chapter, encompassing L.A. and Orange Counties, is the biggest). Steve Rauh, a leader of the Ad Hoc Committee for a Sierra Club Referendum, points back to interviews with peace movement leaders Daniel Ellsberg, Dr. Helen Caldicott and U.S. Rep. Ron Dellums published in 1980 and 1981 in the chapter newsletter he edits as his early attempt to generate club concern about the environmental consequences of the nuclear arms race. Response to the interviews, and to editorials he wrote endorsing their message, was enthusiastic, he recalls, and members began discussing ways to move nuclear war onto the club's agenda.

Now, four years later, some club leaders like to dismiss the current internal tumult over the issue as "Steve Rauh's crusade," or the work of the liberal Bay Area chapter. But those same four years have seen a steady rise in the level of membership and leadership concern about nuclear war and the environment all over the country. The rise of the nuclear freeze movement in that period attracted many club members. The board endorsed the freeze, going so far as to oppose any further U.S. expenditures on production or testing of destabilizing weaponry—a unilateral position, though no one used the word.

Responding to rising member concern, in 1982 Sierra Club leadership established the Committee on War and the Environment, to study the environmental issues raised by the arms race and educate the members about its dangers. Balanced between academics, arms control experts and club members, the committee turned out to be less an activist arm than a study group.

"It was easy to go to San Francisco and spend eight hours discussing the pros and cons of the Strategic Defense Initiative, for example, and never decide if we're against it," said committee member Dr. John Birks, a pioneer of the "nuclear winter" theory



## DISARMAMENT

## Sierra Club faces internal push to increase anti-nuclear work

and professor of atmospheric sciences at the University of Colorado. "The committee got educated, but no one else did. It was not moving the club in an activist direction."

By mid-1984, those trying to make the nuclear arms race a club priority took their case to a wider audience, with a letter to 1,300 grassroots leaders asking them to rank the issue high in the club's priority polling that fall. Signed by seven club directors along with chapter chairs and members active on the issue, the letter seemed to have some impact—nuclear war was ranked eighth when the priorities lists of the club's regional committees, chapters and groups were tallied.

### Not a top priority

But preventing nuclear war didn't make it as one of the club's eight priorities. The priority-ranking process "is not just a popularity contest," Perrault notes, but a complicated assessment of an issue's importance as well as the club's capacity to be effective in educating or lobbying on the matter. On the last count, preventing nuclear war apparently was found wanting.

But in Perrault's view, that doesn't mean the club can't work on the issue. To show its commitment, she says, the board gave permission for "additive" fundraising, so that concerned volunteers could use the club's name to raise funds to hire a staffmember for the Committee on Warfare and the Environment. But the board rejected a motion to contribute \$25,000 to the effort.

"There's a lot of money out there for this," she notes. "Funders who aren't willing to give to forestland preservation or Superfund lobbying will give to anti-nuclear work. The members [behind the petition drive] have not put in enough time raising money." So far, \$25,000 has been raised, with Perrault's help.

But Steve Rauh, the committee member who took the lead on fundraising, says

some foundations looked with skepticism at a request to fund a program the club's own board of directors refused to put money behind. To show its commitment to the effort, Rauh notes, the club could have run the additive fundraising drive through its own department. "The club is a major institution; it has a tremendous development department," he says.

Hence the push to give preventing nuclear war an official status as a club priority, which would guarantee it a portion of fund-

**The center of the anti-nuclear war forces' campaign is a petition drive that would force the matter to a membership vote early next year.**

ing and staff time. If the petition drive gets the requisite 1,300 signatures by October, the matter will come before the board, which can either bow to the petitioners and adopt the issue as a priority, or refer the matter to a club referendum. Ballots would go out next January, results would be known by April.

A referendum campaign would certainly force divisions within the Sierra Club out into the open. Right now no one publicly argues that the club shouldn't get involved at all in anti-nuclear work, only that it's a question of resources and effectiveness.

But David Brower believes "some directors feel the issue could split the club. People join from all walks of life, some just because they enjoy getting out of doors. There's a concern this would be divisive."

### Forward to the future

Bay Area chapter Chair John Holtzclaw thinks the board's doubts that the club could be effective on nuclear arms issues are genuine, but he thinks such considerations can paralyze an organization in the current political climate. Active in the club on urban environment issues, Holtzclaw sees the same approach there.

"People will say, 'This is no time to work on mass transit—the Reagan administration is putting nothing into transit and even the Democrats are going after highway construction funds. It shouldn't be a priority because there's nothing we can do.' My opinion is, there may not be much we can do about nuclear war with Reagan president, but the club should develop plans for making it an issue we can be effective on."

There have been two referenda in Sierra Club history. One ratified a board decision not to oppose the Diablo Canyon nuclear plant (which was later reversed after Three Mile Island). The other reversed the board's support for the Peripheral Canal plan to provide Northern California water to Southern California that was rejected by state voters in 1982.

Those were policy decisions; this will be the first referendum to attempt to intervene in the priority-setting process. "Obviously the referendum organizers don't respect that process, due to their dedication and intense focus on one issue," says club treasurer and board member Phil Hocker, who has opposed attempts to place nuclear war on the club's priorities agenda. While he won't discuss his opinion on the referendum's merits, he believes its existence proves the club "is an intensely democratic organization. I think the referendum is an appropriate way to resolve the issue." ■



## CIVIL LIBERTIES

## 'Terrorists': guilty until proven innocent

By Carole and Paul Bass

HARTFORD, CT

A PASSERBY SHOOK HIS HEAD AS he threaded his way through the throng of uniformed cops, chanting demonstrators, reporters and curious onlookers in front of the federal courthouse here two weeks ago. Squad cars and sawhorses blocked off the adjacent cross street. On the roof, black-fatigued U.S. marshals kept watch with Uzis and M-16s as the TV cameras rolled.

Inside the courthouse, 11 manacled Puerto Rican nationalists—alleged members of a violent group called *Los Macheteros* ("machete wielders")—were charged with helping former Wells Fargo security guard Victor Gerena plan a \$7 million 1983 heist.

"But they didn't get Gerena and they didn't get the money," the passerby said, shrugging. "So what's the big deal?"

The man had a point: after two years of intensive investigation, the FBI finally swooped into the Caribbean and came up with 11 suspects—but the big one, Gerena, got away, supposedly to Cuba. Yet instead of quietly resuming its investigation, the government apparently intends to turn its catch of small fry into a public example of what happens to alleged radical terrorists when they go on trial.

"I'm sure there will be a lot of efforts to confuse the issue," says Connecticut FBI chief Lon Lacey. "It's bank robbery and conspiracy, pure and simple." But the government's handling of the case—from pre-dawn, commando-style arrests to detention without bail or defense attorneys; from the overpowering court house security to the



The Puerto Rican independence movement has been Reagan's prime target.

press release denouncing Cuba's role in promoting "cowardly acts of violence"—made it clear that this will be no ordinary robbery trial.

"They're after the Puerto Rican independence movement," says civil rights attorney William Kunstler, who is helping to coordinate the efforts of Puerto Rican, New York and Hartford-area defense lawyers.

He and others fear that the handling of the Wells Fargo case fits a pattern: the Reagan administration, in enforcing its crackdown on "terrorists" and political enemies, is changing the country's notion of due process—especially when it comes to the doctrine of "innocent until proven guilty."

They trace the pattern to last fall, when the Comprehensive Crime Control Act initiated by the administration became law. The act enables the government to hold defendants without bail not only when it fears an escape attempt, but also when it can prove the defendants pose a "danger to

the community." The act passed amid the administration's renewed proclamations about getting tough with "terrorists" claimed to be supported by an "international Communist conspiracy."

The raid on the *Los Macheteros* suspects is the latest of several theatrical round-ups since the crackdown began. In the "New York Eight" case, for instance, swarms of soldiers arrested black dissident intellectuals, who were held without bail under the Comprehensive Crime Control Act. The same thing happened to the "Ohio Seven," radicals accused in East Coast bombings and arrested last November and this April after a decade-long search.

Four suspects found guilty in Chicago last month of belonging to the Armed Forces for the National Liberation of Puerto Rico (FALN) and conspiring to "oppose the authority of the U.S. government by force" in the name of Puerto Rican independence were also arrested by squads of officers. Their attorney, Michael Deutsch of the People's Law Office, believes that the Puerto Rican independence movement has become a prime target of the Reagan administration's effort to "use this fear of terrorism to broaden their net against activists."

He points to the case of one of the four defendants in the FALN trial, José Rodríguez. Unlike the other three defendants, the government couldn't link Rodríguez to any plans for violent acts. Yet it did have a video tape showing Rodríguez conversing with a resident of an FALN "safe house." The judge instructed the jury to find Rodríguez guilty of conspiracy if it felt certain that he belonged to a group involved in planning violent acts.

Deutsch notes the similarity between the judge's instructions and convictions of suspected Communists during the Red Scare for simply *conspiring* to advocate the overthrow of the government—not necessarily advocating it—by having some ties to Communist Party members.

#### "Police state tactics"

As many as 300 officers and U.S. marshals patrolled outside the U.S. courthouse the opening day of the *Los Macheteros* trial. By contrast, none were in sight outside the U.S. courthouse in Greensboro, N.C., this spring. Yet the Nazis and Ku Klux Klansmen on trial there—along with the federal government—had admitted shooting civil rights demonstrators to death, and an earlier trial had ended with KKK bomb threats.

Civil libertarians worry not so much that defendants like the Ohio Seven or the *Los Macheteros* suspects may have been un-

justly accused as about the government's heavy-handed methods. They complain that through unnecessary "police-state" tactics and—during pretrial bail hearings—unchallenged FBI hearsay about alleged *Los Macheteros* plots, the feds can hopelessly bias potential jurors and intimidate people who share the defendants' views.

"The government gets tremendous advantages," says Ron Kuby, an attorney from the Center for Constitutional Rights who's helping defend the *Los Macheteros* suspects. "It's unconstitutional and especially dangerous in political cases, where the government is moving to criminalize dissent."

U.S. Attorney Alan Nevas—who leads the prosecution and whom President Reagan recently nominated to the federal bench—responds that several appellate courts have upheld the constitutionality of the Comprehensive Crime Control Act. He rejects the argument that the massive security outside the courtroom would bias potential jurors. "There may be 12 jurors selected who were out of town and never heard about this," he argues.

He refuses to respond to more specific charges of how the government may be denying the defendants a fair trial. The defendants' attorneys reported in court, for example, that FBI agents had questioned the defendants—one of whom was being held in solitary confinement—without defense attorneys present, presumably in search of informers. The alleged interrogation took place during the first four days of detention, during which the defendants had no access to attorneys. The judge instructed the defense attorneys formally to register their objections as motions, and his ruling was expected by mid-September.

The defense also claims that the hundreds of fatigue-clad FBI agents participating in the pre-dawn raids in Puerto Rico confiscated materials unrelated to the Wells Fargo robbery, such as the printing press and everything else inside the offices of the journal *Critical Thought*, which espouses Puerto Rican independence. The paper may eventually get its supplies back, Kuby noted, but in the meantime it had to shut down.

#### Swipes at Cuba

FBI spokesmen and Nevas say they're withholding comment until these charges arise in court. But Nevas does respond to questions about a glaring part of the indictment, which charges the defendants with seeking, by the use of force, "the establishment of a socialist-communist form of government in Puerto Rico."

What do "socialist-communist" politics—which in themselves are not prohibited by law—have to do with "robbery and conspiracy, pure and simple"? A lot, Nevas claims. "It explains the basis of the conspiracy, the purpose and goal of the conspiracy."

But suspicions that the government has arranged for a clearly political trial were bolstered by a press release issued by Attorney General Edwin Meese and FBI Director William Webster to announce the indictments. The release reportedly emphasizes Cuba's alleged role in harboring Gerena and much of the stolen money.

Meese called the indictments "a signal to terrorists and their supporters that our response to the cowardly acts of violence will be decisive." "Cuba's aggressive support of terrorism has not gone unnoticed," Webster added. "Let those who would commit crimes here and then seek asylum in other nations know of our determination."

Carole and Paul Bass are freelance journalists based in New Haven.

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Wilfred Burchett

By Michael Shari

## KAMPUCHEA

# Khmer Rouge: new allies, but same war

ARANYAPRATHET, THAILAND

**S**INCE THE REMOVAL OF U.S. FORCES in 1975, Indochina has remained a region at war. There have been two successive incarnations of Kampuchea since then: the four-year rule of the Khmer Rouge and Vietnam's 1978 invasion and war to consolidate its conquest. After the U.S. assumed in 1954 the role played by the French, Kampuchea became a stage upon which global power politics are played out. At stake, the players of this decades-old East-West game will tell you, is whether Washington, Beijing or Moscow will control all of Asia militarily.

Today the U.S. is still entangled in the conflict, and is now positioned discreetly behind the Chinese-supported Khmer Rouge, for no other reason than it pits the U.S. against the Vietnamese forces occupying Kampuchea and against the six-year-old People's Republic of Kampuchea government that Vietnam installed. This summer the U.S. Congress passed and President Reagan signed into law a bill allocating \$5 million to aid the forces fighting the Vietnamese.

The Khmer Rouge has formed an equally unlikely alliance, the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea. It is comprised of:

- Pol Pot, architect of the Khmer Rouge's (KR) psychopathic version of Mao's Great Leap Forward during the four-year existence of the Democratic Kampuchea regime. He is still held to be the leader of the Khmer Rouge, despite his newly announced post as "chairman of the high technical office for national defense," part of the KR's efforts to clean up its public relations image.
- Son Sann, formerly with the KR and now leader of the self-described "non-Communist" Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPLNF); and
- Prince Norodom Sihanouk, monarch ruler of the former French colony of Cambodia until he fell out of U.S. graces and was deposed in a 1970 CIA coup that installed U.S. puppet Lon Nol.

Under the somewhat reluctant prince's leadership, the Coalition is pursuing its highly advertised goal of overcoming the Vietnamese invaders in battle and defeating the Vietnam-installed People's Republic of Kampuchea government in a national election. The Coalition's formation allows the U.S. to join China in its indirect war on the Vietnamese, obscures the dominance of the Khmer Rouge in the struggle against Vietnam and tempers the Khmer Rouge's lingering reputation for crimes against humanity. The Coalition's military forces are supplied by Chinese and U.S. weapons and equipment flowing through (pro-U.S.) Thailand.

Nationalism is the source of the Coalition's unity in resisting Vietnam's client People's

Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) regime. The PRK is led by President Heng Samrin and Kampuchea's Communist Party, which is made up of former followers of the Khmer Rouge and of Prince Sihanouk. The regime considers itself the sole guarantor against a "second coming" of Pol Pot, and in this way justifies depending entirely on Vietnam's military might for survival.

Since 1979 President Samrin has done

A word for "refugee" does not exist in the language of Thailand. It is also absent from Thai law, and Thailand has not signed any United Nations document on refugees except the one that created the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). The Thai government has labeled the 230,000 Khmer (native Kampuchean) refugees in its country "illegal aliens," a purposely ambiguous status that makes Thai policy toward them dependent on the region's complex political relationships.

According to Hanoi, which invaded Kampuchea in order to "save" the Khmer population, the "reactionary" refugees are "an internal affair of the [Heng Samrin's] People's Republic of Kampuchea," as the Vietnamese embassy in Bangkok put it. Heng Samrin's government asserts that there are no refugees, only "counterrevolutionaries." It has refused to cooperate with relief efforts inside Kampuchea that aid what it considers members of the "Pol Pot-Ieng Sary genocidal clique."

Food aid remains desperately needed for Kampucheans. A recent UN agricultural survey found that because of the shortage of rainfall the country's rice production fell by 250,000 tons this year, a 20-30 percent decrease from last year. The most substantial ongoing relief effort is that of the UN Border Relief Organization (UNBRO). The organization has already distributed more than 700 kilometers of shelter material to the needy in Thailand and in Kampuchea, and employs hundreds of trucks to carry in daily rations of water, rice and canned fish. UNBRO, whose major donors are the U.S. and Japan, began its operations in 1983—a time when other organizations, including UNICEF and the International Committee of the

Vietnam's bidding in the war to destroy the resistance concentrated in the country's thick-jungled northwest. Tens of thousands of Kampuchean citizens have been conscripted into the effort, anti-personnel mines have been liberally scattered throughout Coalition-controlled and disputed areas and an anti-tank ditch has been dug along the entire Kampuchea-Thailand border.

Vietnamese and Samrin government

troops are fighting to flush out resistance bases on the Thai border in northwest Kampuchea. The military bases serve as distribution points for weapons and supplies as well as food aid donated from the United Nations (see accompanying article). Since 1978, each dry season—November to May—has seen a Vietnamese offensive against the Khmer Rouge and its allies. This year the fighting was particularly intense, characterized by the extensive use of artillery and mechanized regiments in a more or less successful attempt to block guerrilla traffic along the Thai border. Thousands of Kampucheans and many more Vietnamese were killed.

The Coalition fighters have been forced to abandon a conventional military strategy of territory control in favor of a more unconventional one, and the fighting is now characterized by strikes behind Vietnamese troop lines. The non-combatant population

*Continued on the following page*

## Refugees of Nixon Doctrine and Maoist isolationism

Red Cross, were reluctant to feed members of the Khmer Rouge, according to one source.

Since the relief effort began in 1979, the refugee camps have become the new villages for the starved and shell-shocked Khmer survivors of Maoist isolationism and the Nixon doctrine. In mid-April, UNBRO had to relocate a camp controlled by the KPLNF at Nong Chan in Thailand that was being shelled by heavy Vietnamese artillery. The civilians joined others from Ampil, Dong Ruk and Ban Sangae at a new site with more than 70,000 people.

UNBRO was given no choice but to regulate extensively the ground area of the site for each bamboo hut, vegetable garden, drainage ditch, latrine and footpath. The result is the most suburban specimen of human civilization for miles around, and many Western observers see the camp as a return to some kind of exotic ancient culture. The Khmers, however, have no such feelings for bamboo, thatch or dried grass. For them the camp's most attractive feature may just be the UNBRO-supplied blue plastic shelter material.

Relief work inside Kampuchea is threatened by Hanoi's increasingly successful efforts to seal off the Thai-Kampuchean border. Refugee camps on both sides of the border are subjected to Vietnamese artillery fire, and this February the Khmer Rouge stronghold in Thailand's Phnom Malai mountain range was overrun by Vietnamese troops.

Thailand has tolerated refugee and Coa-

lition guerrilla groups on its frontier as part of a U.S. and Chinese-sponsored general strategy of supporting the three factions of the Coalition, but also because the refugees' presence provides a "buffer zone" to inhibit Vietnamese incursions. Thailand recently prohibited Planned Parenthood and foreign language instruction in relief camps, because the programs were proving too attractive for refugees who would rather not fight in Kampuchea. As part of U.S. policy, the move is designed to strengthen the base of support for the "non-Communist" Khmer People's National Liberation Front.

The Thai military has even gone so far as armed intervention to strengthen the KPLNF. On February 17, 20 percent of the population of the Khao I Dang camp in Thailand—some 1,000 people—were seized at gunpoint and bused back to the Kampuchean border, where the KPLNF operates. Those who escaped being rounded up and expelled from Thailand found themselves without the protection of Thai soldiers and exposed to banditry attacks by maverick guerrillas.

For its part, the U.S. has reveled in its image as provider of a humanitarian aid program that has proven very successful in attracting refugees from socialist countries in the area. One aid worker in the U.S.-funded UNBRO program said, "If we forgot these people, the Russians or the Vietnamese will not forget them. They will take care of them."

—M.S. and B.H.



10 IN THESE TIMES SEPT. 18-24, 1985  
Continued from preceding page  
formerly under the Coalition's protection is now the responsibility of Thailand and the UN's relief efforts. There are more than 230,000 mouths to feed.

At the end of the dry season the Coalition claimed to have killed 27,000 of the estimated 160,000-180,000 Vietnamese troops in Kampuchea, while Phnom Penh was congratulating itself for dislodging non-permanent Coalition camps on the border. Ironically, the Vietnamese are now having to learn anti-guerrilla warfare.

"The Vietnamese have become the Americans themselves," said Pol Ham, information officer of the KPLNF, "and we have become Vietnam."

Among Vietnamese troops in Kampuchea, morale is said to be as low as among U.S. troops when they were in Vietnam. Soldiers siphon gasoline from their own vehicles to sell for food and goods that they send home to their families. According to an aid worker stationed in Phnom Penh, the only reason some Vietnamese soldiers remain in the army and don't desert is so that there is one less mouth for their families to feed back home.

The \$5 million aid grant to resistance fighters the U.S. Congress passed this summer demonstrates the extent to which Washington has now reversed Jimmy Carter's 1976-79 human rights crusade against the Khmer Rouge. Although the aid is specifically addressed to "non-Communist guerrillas," it complements Chinese and Thai support for the Khmer Rouge and gives the CIA the "green light" to resume

covert action in the region.

The Khmer Rouge is still the same military and political force that defeated the U.S. military presence in Cambodia in 1975 and then implemented a "socialist" transformation of the country. The alleged bourgeoisie—which meant anyone with more than a high school education—was slaughtered wholesale by the Democratic Kampuchea regime, and the entire urban population was flushed out into the countryside to work the land, according to refugees at the Khao I Dang camp in Thailand. Money was abolished, the calendar was reset to "The Year Zero," Kampuchea's meager industry was all but destroyed and children were taken from their families to be indoctrinated as cadre. Chinese specialists arrived to advise the Khmer Rouge campaign.

Having gone through what is described as a "born again" phase, the Khmer Rouge now complains bitterly of being demonized by the Vietnamese and by the Western media. "Genocide" is a term shared by the West, Vietnam and the Heng Samrin government in describing the degree of the Khmer Rouge killings, which they all estimate at around three million deaths from executions and famine.

But those estimates conflict with UN and resistance Coalition findings that put Khmer Rouge executions during the evacuation of Phnom Penh at no more than 3,000, the number of deaths in Khmer Rouge military operations at about 8,000 and about 150,000 executions total during the four years of Khmer Rouge rule. The dominant

estimates are distorted in part because they count those who fled to Thailand and some of those killed in the war against Lon Nol and the U.S. as among the murdered.

The KPLNF, touted by Washington as the "non-Communist" alternative for Kampuchea's future, portrays the Khmer Rouge—with which it is allied in the Coalition government—as having lost all popular support. It claims that the Khmer Rouge stands no chance of gaining power through the elections the Coalition proposes to hold after the defeat of the Vietnamese. KPLNF information officer Pol Ham describes China's support for the KR as "reluctant" and says "China will support the faction that wins the elections.... But China cannot now abandon the KR or it will be blamed."

One source in the Khmer Rouge depicted it as having willingly ended attachment to its population base—now under the care of UN and Thai relief operations—"abandoned the socialist revolution" and gone into battle alongside the other two Coalition factions for "independence, freedom and neutrality" against the common Vietnamese enemy. "If we (the Khmer Rouge) continue with the socialist revolution, it would add up to the same thing as the Vietnamese revolution."

Along with most observers, however, even *Newsweek* magazine admits that "almost everyone in Cambodia" tolerates Heng Samrin's regime and the Vietnamese military as the only insurance against the return of the Khmer Rouge's brand of totalitarianism. The Khmer Rouge, with

more than 30,000 fighters and the firm military and diplomatic support of China, is by far the largest of the three military forces in the Coalition fighting the Vietnamese.

After years of struggle against the military Goliaths of the U.S. and now Vietnam, the Khmer Rouge is the only force in the Coalition that can really challenge the Vietnamese military occupation. The Khmer Rouge also enjoys formal recognition by the UN as the legitimate government of Kampuchea. Although Son Sann and Prince Sihanouk have moved much of the Coalition's decision-making power out of the Khmer Rouge's reach, it is clear who needs who in the arrangement. Recognizing this, Prince Sihanouk rejected a Vietnamese proposal to hold general elections in Kampuchea that would exclude the Khmer Rouge, even though he is an outspoken critic of the Khmer Rouge and has sought an end to Pol Pot's leadership of the group.

In its eagerness to wade back into the Southeast Asian war, the U.S. has convinced itself that the \$5 million in aid to the coalition fighting the Vietnamese occupation will help "bring Hanoi to the bargaining table." But the last attempt at negotiations for troop withdrawal and elections was the 1982 United Nations Conference on Cambodia, which was cut short when the Soviet Union and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam refused to participate. In Vietnam today distrust of the "peaceful" intentions of U.S. policy seems to run as deep as do the scars of the U.S. war against that country.

Michael Shari is a lecturer in journalism at Srinakarinwirot University in Bang Saen, Thailand.

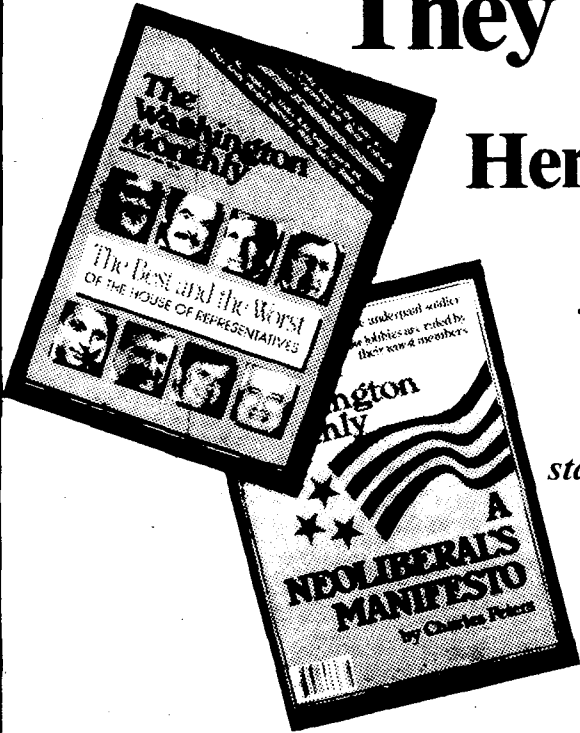
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By Dan La Botz

LA PAZ, BOLIVIA

**B**OLIVIA, A NATION PERPETUALLY in crisis in recent years, now faces yet another critical situation—a confrontation between Victor Paz Estenssoro, the conservative president who took power in August, and the powerful Bolivian Workers Federation (COB).

Paz instituted an austerity program on August 29, devaluing the *peso*, reducing food subsidies, increasing gasoline prices and planning lay-offs in government-owned enterprises. The strongest union, the Miners Federation, reacted immediately, calling a two-day general strike on August 31. On September 4, a national general strike by miners, factory workers, government employees, bank workers and others brought business and industry to a halt.

If the conflict between Paz and the unions intensifies, it is expected that Gen. Hugo Banzer, who ruled Bolivia as military dictator between 1971-78 will step in and try to take power. But the workers' movement and the radical parties are badly demoralized and divided, and it is not clear whether they can resist Paz now and Banzer later.

The most pressing concern is how to stop the collapse of the country's economy. Inflation, running at 14,000 percent, has destroyed the currency. Before the recent devaluation, one U.S. dollar equaled 1,500,000 Bolivian pesos. The country owes about \$5 billion, is almost \$1 billion in arrears and hasn't paid back a cent in more than a year.

The average factory worker takes home \$10 per month, while a school teacher earns about \$30 per month. Unemployment stands at about 15 percent. The Indian peasantry, comprising half of the nation's six million population, lives in a subsistence economy, escaping the ravages of inflation, but always close to disaster, particularly in the bleak Andean highlands, the *altiplano*.

During the July election campaign Paz said ironically, "I have always admired Doctor Duvalier because his Haiti kept Bolivia from being the poorest country in Latin America." But Bolivia is sinking below the level of Haitian misery.

At the headquarters of the Miners' Federation in La Paz, *In These Times* asked Juan Lechin Oquendo, head of the miners union since 1944 and leader of the Bolivian Workers Federation (COB) since 1952, what he expected of the new president and his program. "Nothing good," he answered. "Like Banzer, Paz is going to apply the model of the International Monetary Fund. It is an economic model that serves the speculative sectors of the economy, like the Bank of Commerce—the natural allies of North American imperialism. This political economy is against the productive sectors of the people; particularly the working class."

The COB—which represents not only almost all workers but also peasants, students and tenants—has long called for indefinite postponement of payments on the foreign debt, as well as demands for a living wage and subsidies on basic commodities. It's unlikely that either Paz' programs or that of the COB can be achieved within the context of the country's crumbling economy and tenuous political democracy. Consequently, only a more radical organization will work: socialism or fascism.

The U.S. embassy, which steers Bolivian politics, is supporting Paz for now. But if he can't impose austerity through parliamentary maneuvers, it will likely let Banzer do so with the usual dictatorial methods—murder, disappearances, exile and prison.

As German Gutierrez Gantier, a member of parliament for the Socialist Party-One (PS-1), stood outside the parliament building, he summed up the current situation this way: "There's going to be a war. They will declare it. But a war takes two parties. We want to organize the left so it will be a war and not a massacre."

When Gutierrez says "massacre," it is not hyperbole. During the epoch of military



Bolivia's conservative President Victor Paz Estenssoro (left) and head of the miners' union and leader of Bolivian Workers Federation Juan Lechin Oquendo (right)



## BOLIVIA

# A divided left faces collapsing economy

dictators, from 1964-82, the air force bombed the mines and the San Andres University, the army slaughtered peasant protesters and peasant, worker and student leaders were arrested, tortured, exiled or murdered.

### Splintered and dispirited

Whether or not a massacre can be prevented will depend upon the actions of the left, today splintered and dispirited, largely as a result of its participation in the Popular Democratic Unity (UDP) government of Hernan Siles Zuaso. Siles was elected president in October 1982, heading the UDP's popular front of liberal and leftist parties. Siles' own Left National Revolutionary Movement (MNR-I) was supported by the two largest left groups, the pro-Soviet Bolivian Communist Party (PCB) and the Left Revolutionary Movement (MIR), a left nationalist party.

The UDP government's inability to stop inflation, improve real wages or in any way better the situation of workers or peasants discredited the regime and the left parties in it. In February, a two-week general strike was staged against the UDP, culminating in March in massive demonstrations of miners and other workers in La Paz. Siles was forced to resign early and call for elections.

The UDP's failure led to Banzer's fascist National Democratic Action (ADN) party garnering a plurality of votes in the July 15 election. But since ADN didn't win a majority, the election was thrown into parliament, where left, center and conservative parties joined together against the threat of the fascist Banzer and selected Paz, who heads the conservative Historic National Revolutionary Movement (MNR-H).

The catastrophe of the UDP caused a crack-up of the left: the Communist Party of Bolivia (PCB) split in two, both groups keeping the same name and both publishing a newspaper called *Unity*. The Left Revolutionary Movement (MIR) split into three groups: MIR, MIR-Bolivia Libre and MIR-Masas. And the Socialist Party-One (PS-1) split in two, so now there's also a

PS-1 MQ (MQ after Marcelo Quiroga Santa Cruz, the founder of PS-1). In addition, there are Trotskyists, Maoists and the Popular Patriotic Bloc (BPP), which never supported the UDP, and perhaps a dozen Indian parties, or Tupac Katarist parties, as they're called after the 18th-century Indian revolutionary.

Left parties attempting to draw the lessons of the UDP experience seem to have arrived at three fundamental analyses. The right-wing parts of the PCB and the MIR believe participation in the UDP was correct and they would do it again. The key issues for these groups are the fight for democracy in the face of fascism and the struggle for national liberation against imperialism.

The left-wing splinter from the PCB (the Ramiro Barrenechea faction) and the MIR-Masas group argue that "class alliances," or popular fronts or joining with capitalist parties in government is acceptable in principle, but that the left and labor and peasant organizations should have fought for control of the "class alliance." Democracy must be defended, but there must also be a struggle for socialism—for revolution.

And a third group, made up of other leftists from these splinters, is coming close

**The average factory worker takes home \$10 per month, while a school teacher earns \$30 per month. Unemployment stands at about 15 percent.**

to the Trotskyists in the Unified Revolutionary Workers Party (POR-U), believing the left always ends up serving the interests of the capitalist parties in popular fronts. These groups recognize that by themselves they do not have the political strength to pose a real political alternative. So, modeling themselves on Nicaragua and El Salvador, they propose the creation of a new revolutionary party out of a process of united fronts and political fusions.

### Key battles

All these theories are presently being tested in the tin-mining area, which is the home of the Bolivian labor unions and the left. The heart of the industry, located on the cold and rather desolate *altiplano*, is the mountain town of Llallagua and the adjacent Siglo XX and Catavi mines. Some 5,000 of the nation's 25,000 miners work in Siglo XX and Catavi extracting the tin ore that is the nation's main export.

The Siglo XX *campamento*, the miners' town, is dominated by a larger-than-life statue of a miner with a jack-hammer in one hand and a rifle raised over his head in the other. It is a monument to the tin miners who overthrew the government in 1952. The statue stands in a small plaza, and around the plaza, up and down the mountain, are the row houses of the miners, small boxes of three tiny rooms.

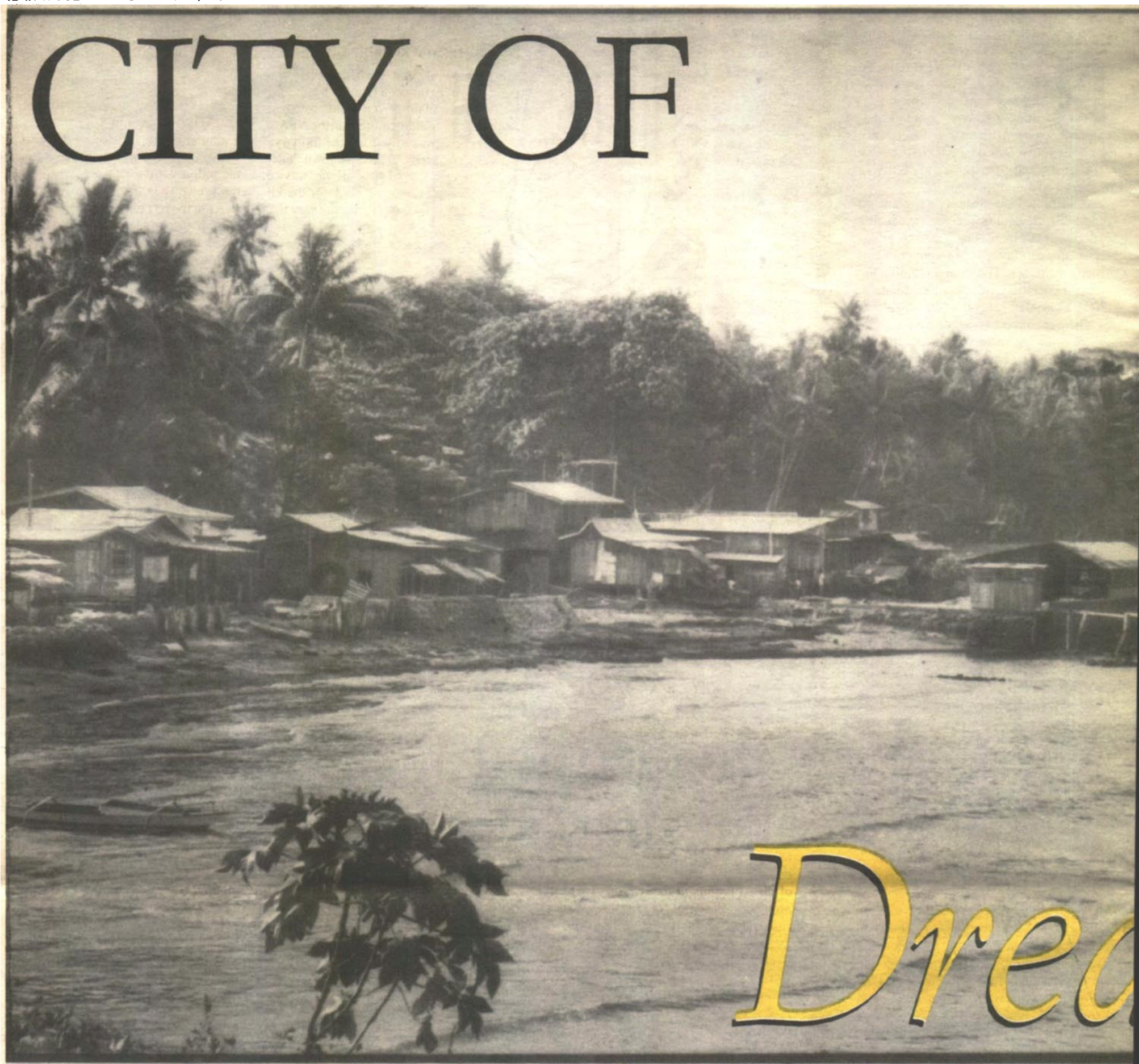
Today the miners who work in the mines earn their housing, their basic food and about \$7 a month in cash. The dangerous work and the harsh life of the camp make most of the miners militant, and leads some of them to become revolutionaries. They, too, are sorting out the UDP catastrophe and the crack-up of the left. For the moment they are taking a cautious position.

In union elections held in August, a coalition of Siles' Left National Revolutionary Movement (MNR-I) and the right-wing splinter of the PCB won. Secretary of Conflicts Victor Oliva says the coalition is committed to "defending union democracy against military takeovers like that of Garcia Meza." He does not expect Paz to crack down on the unions. The coalition speaks out against imperialism and in favor of proletarian internationalism, but in Bolivia those phrases are time-worn cliches—the rhetoric of the nationalist movement over the years.

But the coalition will be pushed by more radical miners—such as Emil Balcazar. He has been a miner since 1968 and worked at Siglo XX since 1975. A member of the Communist Party, he was jailed twice during the Banzer years and tortured for or-

*Continued on page 22*





By James B. Goodno

DAVAO CITY, MINDANAO, PHILIPPINES

**S**INCE FEW TOURISTS VISIT THIS vast southern coastal city anymore, most visitors have a purpose. Missionaries come to win bodies and souls for a right-wing God, and diplomats arrive searching for a key to the nation's future. Journalists flood the city looking for a revolution, while soldiers, politicians and government officials arrive in droves trying to prevent one.

Elsewhere in the country, Davao is notorious. Human rights activists decry the mounting deaths of innocent civilians and political activists. Here, they claim, an average of three individuals die every day. Residents of the sprawling slums complain bitterly about the activities of government troops in their shanty towns. Even Manila taxi drivers warn against visiting southeastern Mindanao.

"Mindanao was once the land of promise," said Benjamin Bañiso, a leader of the Southern Philippines Federation of Labor and of Nagkahiusang Mamumuo sa Habagatang Mindanao or Southeastern Mindanao Confederation of Unions (Namamhin). "Thousands were lured here in the '50s with the promise of land and a brighter future. Now what people are planting in the land of promise are bullets."

Yet from the terror has sprung not only despair, but hope. The factories, slums and rural-like barrios in this city of 750,000 host the strongest popular organizations in the country. In some ways—with its diverse population—Davao is a microcosm of the

country as a whole. Likewise, the movement here is a microcosm of what the left would like to see spread throughout the country.

"Sometimes I just wish people in the rest of the country would just hurry up," said a Catholic nun active in the open movement.

#### Laboratory for the NDF

Thousands of people belong to mass organizations affiliated with the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan or New Patriotic Alliance (Bayan), a militant legal organization. Left labor unions are fast growing in size and influence. Students, slum dwellers, women and others have their militant groups. Even the banned National Democratic Front (NDF)—a coalition of underground sectoral groups, radical Christians, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the New People's Army (NPA)—is well established among the city's dispossessed. Signs of its support are visible everywhere.

"Davao City is a laboratory for the NDF," said Lt. Gen. Fidel Ramos, acting chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). His statement finds support among members and supporters of the outlawed coalition.

"I don't mean to brag," said an activist based here, "but Davao has been first with many forms of popular struggle. Davao is the place where armed city partisans first became active. And it is where the first *welgang bayan* (people's or national strike) was successfully staged."

The experiences of Davao City, paired with national and international develop-

ments, led the NDF to alter its national strategy, which, despite alterations, remains based on Mao Zedong's concept of surrounding the cities from the rural areas.

"In the past, cities played a passive or secondary role in the revolutionary movement," said "Lucas Fernandez," a leading member of the NDF's Mindanao Commission. Speaking in a safe house in Mandanao, Fernandez told *In These Times*: "After Nicaragua and, more important, after the Aquino assassination, we began to reassess this way of thinking. We developed a greater understanding of urban potential. Adjustments had to be made to the strategy of surrounding the cities from the countryside."

"As early as 1975 or 1976 Davao City was experimenting with sparrow units (the popular name for partisan squads)," he continued. "At first they were based in the countryside. They would carry out an operation in the city then run back to the hills. In Davao we learned that we could establish a base of support and operation in the city. This lesson will be propagated in other cities throughout the country."

Agdao is perhaps the most famous community here. It is an enormous slum built on swamp land between the sea and the city center. Some 150,000 workers, unemployed workers, former peasants, vendors and their families live in Agdao's small wooden houses and shanties, which are close together. In some parishes they are separated by small dirt roads. In other places they stand one abutting another with only a maze of narrow walkways for passage. Several parishes and countless homes

stand on stilts and platforms above murky swamp water festering with human and animal waste and disease-carrying insects.

Poverty alone would not give a community fame in a country where poverty is commonplace. What distinguishes Agdao from the slums of Manila, Cebu and other urban centers and gives it its somewhat romantic image is the strength of the people's response to poverty and repression.

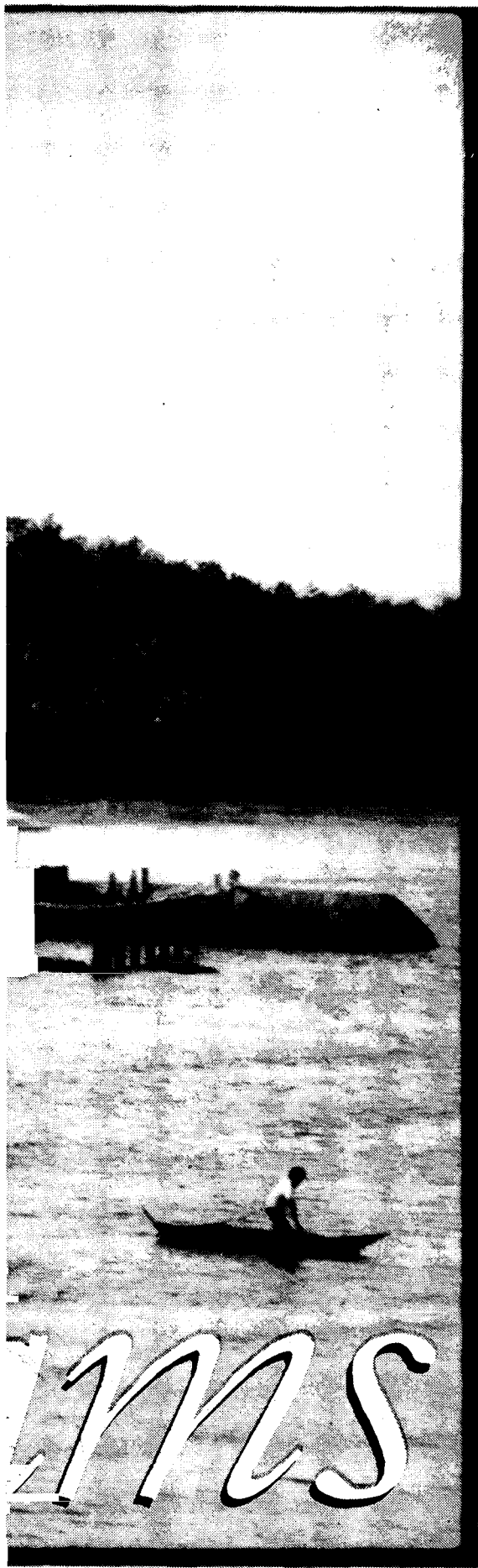
Red graffiti on buildings fronting the two-lane national highway as it passes through Agdao greets and salutes the NPA, the NDF and its youth wing, Kabataan Makabayan, or Patriotic Youth, and denounces the AFP. Similar messages appear on banners strung from trees, fences and homes inside the community.

As many as three-quarters of Agdao's residents belong to open mass organizations affiliated with the Alyansa sa Barrio Agdao, or the Alliance of Barrio Agdao (Aba), which is in turn affiliated with the citywide Alyansa Batok sa Kawad-on, or Alliance Against Poverty. Still other residents belong to the invisible organizations of the NDF.

As a tribute to the popular and revolutionary movements of Agdao, the community is today known by the nickname Nicaragdao. Similarly, the community of Ma-a here is now called Ma-anagua.

Aba coordinates the activities of 23 member groups representing various parishes of Agdao. It conducts seminars, trains health workers, joins marches and rallies, fights the demolition of squatters' houses—most of Agdao's residents are





Many people in Davao City live in wooden houses and shanties, like this squatters-workers' community.

heavily armed soldiers before a house-to-house search is conducted.

"There used to be one or two zoning operations a week," said Ite, an Agdao resident and leader of Aba. "They are less frequent now. Plenty of mass leaders have been not only arrested, but also subsequently killed."

It is difficult for the military to operate in the slums. As soon as a stranger enters one of these places, news of his arrival is flashed from house to house. Military movements are likewise monitored closely. "Hot" persons and young men disappear before the military arrive in a targeted parish.

In a small community of workers on the outskirts of the urban area, young men organized themselves into a self-defense force following a series of raids and zoning operations (the most recent of which resulted in the arrest and rape of a 15-year-old girl). Mostly they just monitor the community, but they also sought the aid of "the people in the hills" in arming themselves. Now they own a handful of somewhat dated long and short arms.

Soldiers cannot move comfortably alone or in pairs or threes anywhere in the city. Scores of soldiers, police officers, paramilitary troopers and informers have been slain by NPA sparrow units in recent months and years. Even in the downtown district uniformed policemen are rarely seen. Instead, jeeploads of soldiers with M-16s or ICHDF men with sub-machine guns are spotted.

#### The other war

Though it is the shooting war that garners headlines, there is another, perhaps more important, but related war being waged here—the battle for the hearts and minds of the public.

"We have launched a massive public information drive," said Brig. Gen. Jaime C. Echeverria, a career army officer in charge of all AFP units in the two cities and five provinces covered by Regional Unified Command XI. "We tell the people what the government is doing for them. We try to show them that the true Filipino soldier is a professional."

Dialogs, health care, anti-Communist propaganda and civic action are some elements of the public information and counter-insurgency drive. Many of these programs are conducted in communities identified as being under left-wing influence. Some are part of the national counter-revolutionary Civic Action Program. In Region XI the military (and, in some places, civil authorities) constructs schools, piers and other facilities under the auspices of that program.

"The tide has turned," said Lt. Col. Douglas Rosete, Region XI's community relations officer. "People are now recognizing what the Communists are up to. They are resorting to terror and fear to maintain their influence."

"Region XI was the first to be influenced by the Communists," said Echeverria, a burly veteran of the Vietnam and Moro wars dressed in camouflaged fatigues and toting a .45 calibre automatic in a shoulder holster. On the general's desk is a copy of *Problems of Communism*, a U.S. Information Service journal. "We believe we will be the first to be liberated from the Communist threat."

Outside Camp Panacan the propaganda drive is not looked upon so positively. Echeverria claims the leftist influence has been eliminated in Agdao. He said he would visit the place alone, unescorted by security guards, if it weren't against regulations. Yet when he sends his unmarked staff car to the city center, his driver follows a round-about route simply to avoid the highway through Agdao.

People in the slums look on with disbelief here when they hear talk of government services. They point to the lack of sufficient schools, available health care, sanitation and clean water. What services, they ask. In Agdao, residents say only small, over-

crowded schools and bags of sand to fill some of the wet areas are made available.

#### Not a benevolent campaign

Most commonly, residents complain that the military's campaign is not so benevolent as its backers claim. Even uninvolved residents fear the military more than the NPA.

"No one here really trusts the military," says a desk clerk in a downtown hotel. Adds the operator of a small car service: "The military blames the NPA for the killings and extortion, but really military men are behind them."

Activists' sentiments are even stronger. "There has been a total collapse of peace and order," said Silvestre Bello, an attorney and acting chairman of Bayan-Mindanao.

## In Davao City, the military battles the left for the hearts and minds of Filipinos.

(The chairman, another Davao lawyer, is imprisoned for political activities.) "People have almost unanimously lost faith in people in government—more so in people in the military."

"People don't believe in those dialogs," said labor leader Bañiso. "They know the real score."

For labor the real score eliminates most legal means of seeking justice. Selective enforcement of labor laws effectively outlaws strikes in the region, according to Bañiso. He said troops regularly violate a national law requiring them to remain 50 yards from a picket line. Conversely, they strictly protect management's legal right to egress and ingress during a strike. Thus scabs, raw material and finished goods can flow in and out of factories despite picket lines.

(The NDF's Fernandez says Davao workers can still stage strikes owing to the strength of the armed and unarmed popular movements here. But during mid-August there were no strikes within the boundaries of this, one of the world's largest cities by area.)

Several workers have already been killed this year on picket lines or in their communities. A handful of labor leaders from the region are missing or in jail. One, Joel B. Maglunsod, languishes in prison even though he has completed his sentence. Several other top labor leaders are in hiding following the appearance of their names as "subversive" leaders on military "orders of battle."

Despite various forms of pressure, militant unions continue to grow. Namamhin, an alliance of unions in the region affiliated with the national Kilusang Mayo Uno, or May First Movement, claims more than 70,000 members. Affiliated unions are in the process of forming industry-wide coalitions. The left unions play a leading role in the open mass movement—especially now that the *welgang bayan* is a frequently used weapon. (In May Davao City was crippled by the third *welgang bayan* in less than a year; two more may be held before the end of 1985.)

The middle classes—business owners and professionals—have escaped much of the terror and poverty and the more numerous workers and slum dwellers. They are open to the ideas and strategies of a variety of forces—the moderate and conservative opposition, the government and the military. Currently, they are the life's blood of a "peace movement" being spearheaded by the rightist bishop of Davao, Msgr. Antonio L. Mabutas. Nominally independent, the peace movement has the not-so-secret backing of the military. Before speaking with *In These Times*, Col. Rosete had met with Mabutas and other leaders of the movement. The military is pleased that the movement is blaming the NPA for the city's

violence and thus letting the AFP off the hook.

Left activists say they would be open to supporting a peace movement if it attacked military abuses, poverty and other factors seen as giving rise to the city's violent character. In fact, it was Bayan that first gave rise to a peace movement when it held a summit meeting for peace this past May. Though invited, government officials and the military boycotted the session, calling it a propaganda ploy of the NDF.

As in the rest of the country, many members of the middle class here seem motivated by two concerns: increased liberty and some degree of social justice, and economic stability that will allow them to go about their business somewhat profita-

bly. Such concerns lead many to support the fragmented center-right or center-left opposition groups.

Bayan is the key to attracting the middle-class support to the left-wing program of establishing a democratic coalition government, representing the poorer elements of society and bringing about a more equitable distribution of the wealth. Bayan has close ties with the Mindanao Alliance, a regional party headed by northern Mindanao Member of Parliament Hombono Adaza and popular among liberal members of the middle class. It is also involved in meetings with leaders of the traditional political parties with the goal of fielding a unified opposition slate in local elections currently set for next year. (Though not involved in these discussions, the NDF said it will back selected opposition candidates in the local elections. Because of the strength of the mass organizations here, the traditional politicians cannot take for granted the role of the left—both open and underground—in the local elections.)

"Our decision to participate in the electoral process has helped us make inroads into the middle class," said Bayan's Bello, who is also a member of the Mindanao Alliance. "But though many members of our middle class are anti-Marcos, they just aren't ready to accept our entire program, especially the anti-imperialist aspects of it."

Somewhat more bluntly, a local labor lawyer said: "Members of the middle forces (class) are just not ready to accept leadership from masses."

Some members of the business and professional community are influenced in their thinking by the left—even if they do not now support all their conclusions.

"Nothing will improve, none of the problems of Davao will be solved, until poverty is eliminated," said the manager of a local lumber firm. Though he said this, he did not offer any solutions. But then the poor of Davao are no longer looking to the businessmen, professionals, the politicians, the state or even the institutional church for answers to their problems. More and more they are looking to themselves and to the left.

Few expect much good to come in the immediate future. Many would agree with Bañiso if they heard him say: "I expect more repression and more resistance in the next few years."

But in the long run there is more hope. "People are hoping that if this struggle will win, and we expect it will win, that we will have a better life and a fair share of the wealth," said Ite as he drank water in the tiny kitchen of his unfinished Agdao home. "We are hoping to get real democracy, real freedom, for we know that the freedom given to us is fake."

James B. Goodno is a freelance journalist based in the Philippines.



## EDITORIAL



## Black freedom and the Red Menace

Last week, in a move forced upon him by world opinion—and by the widespread anti-apartheid activities initiated by black political leaders and student demonstrators last spring—President Reagan took a step that appeared, in the words of the *New York Times*, to have “altered views he has held for his entire presidency and, indeed, throughout his political career.” This is a considerable accomplishment for the anti-apartheid movement, even if the reality is a great deal less than the appearance. It shows that popular disapproval of South Africa’s social system is strong enough to force the president to give his dear friends in Pretoria a slap on the wrist, and to suffer the embarrassment of a public display of indecisiveness.

But behind the rhetoric, administration officials readily acknowledged what every knowledgeable person already knew—that the president’s sanctions were designed to be toothless in regard to the South African government. But not in regard to the Senate. There, the president’s bite—and his tactical acumen—were much sharper. He provided just enough ammunition for Senate majority leader Bob Dole and Senate Foreign Relations Chairman Richard G. Lugar to justify abandonment of the congressional sanction bill that seemed unstoppable only a week earlier. For Reagan, the embarrassment of reversing himself in public—something he has a lot of practice doing—was much less than the risk of having a Congress out of control. And more important, the presi-

dent did not want a bill containing a provision in which South Africa was given 12 months to make progress in its racial policies or face a ban on new American commercial investment there. That might really have hurt his dearest friends both at home and abroad.

Reagan played his part well. If all you knew about his South Africa policy was what you saw on television—and the administration counts on that being all that most Americans know—you might have been convinced that the administration actually has the welfare of South African blacks uppermost in its mind. But the administration’s true attitude was given away by Secretary of State George Shultz a week before Reagan issued his executive order. “If South Africa falls,” Shultz said, “we will then lose all of southern Africa—and you know who’ll get it.”

Putting geopolitics aside for the moment, let’s look at the first part of Shultz’s statement. “If South Africa falls,” he said. If the United States withdrew its support of Pretoria and anything “fell,” would it be South Africa, or would it be only the Pretoria regime? Who could it fall to other than the vast majority of the population of South Africa? Why should the American people fear that?

The answer, of course, is that the American people have nothing to fear from a revolutionary change in South African society. While it’s true that we have no business fomenting such a revolution, neither is it in our interest as a people to continue supporting and identifying with the present regime.

Reagan knows that, and so does Shultz, which is why they, along with their friend and ally Rev. Jerry Falwell, frame the issue entirely within their bi-polar view of the world. As Falwell kept insisting in a debate with Jesse Jackson on ABC’s *Nightline* show, the real issue is not apartheid—we all hate that, said Jerry—it is godless communism. The real villain is the Soviet Union, which is just sitting licking its chops waiting for us to abandon Pretoria so it can gobble up those poor blacks and have yet another African government under its thumb.

### The emperor’s clothes

The saddest part of this performance was that Falwell’s argument went unanswered by Jackson. He weakly complained about red-baiting, but when Falwell pressed the point Jackson fell silent and resorted to abstract appeals to fairness. This wasn’t Jackson’s fault—he’s one of a very few in public life who challenges the Soviet

Menace view of the world—but it brought home just how successful the administration’s Soviet baiting has been with our politicians, even though few Americans really fear the Soviet Union. This issue is the emperor’s clothes of American politics, but because the Democrats were the architects of the Cold War liberal consensus, and because it is they who were burned when Sen. Joe McCarthy turned their rhetoric back on them, Democrats and liberals will not confront the issue head-on.

The result is that Reagan can get away with policies that on the surface seem based on wildly contradictory principles. Thus when pressed about harsher sanctions in the event that South Africa did not respond adequately to his slap, Reagan said “remember, we’re talking about a sovereign nation. And there are limits to what another country can do. We can’t give orders to South Africa.” Yet the pres-

## With new sanctions, Reagan hopes to rescue his policy.

ident had no qualms in suggesting that he would stop arming and directing counter-revolutionaries in Nicaragua only if that country said “uncle.” And ain’t Nicaragua a sovereign nation?

Of course, both policies are ultimately rationalized on the basis of the alleged Soviet threat, even though the true principle that unites both policies—the one at the root of the Reagan regime—is a defense of the world status quo—of corporate domination of the Third World. That is why in opposing revolution in Nicaragua and South Africa, Reagan can ignore sovereignty with impunity in one case and uphold it as a “principle” in the next.

The true principle underlying administration actions cannot be up-front. It won’t play in Peoria, no matter how nicely it does in Pretoria. As with arms control and the budget deficit, Reagan’s reactionary foreign policy has its rationale in the myth of the Soviet threat. And because it has been the predominant myth of the past four decades—the ideological glue of Cold War liberalism and bi-partisan foreign policy—this is a powerful tool for the right. But it is a myth, and one that becomes more and more obvious the more one examines it. It’s time to take it on. ■

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## LETTERS

## Letter from Nicaragua

IN WASHINGTON, CONGRESS VOTES MILLIONS of dollars in aid for the *contra* in order to prove some warped sense of toughness, and Reagan talks in increasingly vicious terms about the battle between his "freedom fighters" and the evil Communist Sandinistas.

Here in Nicaragua, one of my roommates just returned from a seminar in the mountain town of Matagalpa. He was a day late, he explained, because he stayed to go to the funeral of a co-worker who was ambushed by the *contra*, his eyes and tongue gouged out, his body hacked to pieces. He was unarmed, on his way to a meeting in a nearby town.

In the same region, one of the new settlements built for war refugees was attacked last week, leaving 10 dead, two of them children. A U.S. reporter wrote that the settlement was completely civilian: "the only military object anywhere in sight was a pair of abandoned army boots."

The stories go on and on. A Nicaraguan friend was sent to help build a farming cooperative in eastern Nicaragua, two days' walk from the end of the nearest road, almost inaccessible in the rainy season. The poor families who make up the cooperative used to scratch a living from tiny mountain plots. The government helped them join together and gave them unused land in an area large enough to enable them to double or triple their output. But gathering together also makes them a target for the *contra*: cooperatives have been one of the hardest hit sectors in the war. While my friend was there, word came that a band of 200 *contra* was on the way. She spent the night in a trench with the dozen others in the village who had guns, waiting to die. She says she spent most of the night figuring out how she would guarantee that she died quickly, so as not to be captured alive.

The *contra* never came that night (they apparently thought there was a large force defending the cooperative and left without attacking). Last year they were less lucky: five cooperative members were killed in a *contra* attack.

My friends Miguel and Isaias have another set of stories. They are teaching in a high school in Matiguás, almost in the center of Nicaragua, on the edge of the steep Nicaraguan mountains. Their school has been chosen for a pilot program to teach rural peasant kids, combining basic literacy classes with technical training that will prepare them for middle-level positions running farms and agricultural programs. Programs like this are crucial to the future of any poor, rural country: they need to develop education programs that are relevant to local needs and will help develop the countryside.

But this year, there is no money to run this or any other pilot program. The students, most of whom come from far off in the mountains, live in a communal house with Miguel and Isaias. They get 200 cordobas (30 cents) a month to buy food. Miguel and Isaias use most of their salaries to buy more, but there's still not enough to go around. And next year, there may not be funding to pay the teachers or fund the experimental farm.

Meanwhile, they live with the ever present war. One of their students was killed on his way to visit his family and two have been kidnapped. The local hospital is full of war casualties. Miguel and Isaias help clean the bodies of the dead before their families arrive to claim the bodies.

The war news in July followed the familiar pattern: two attacks on the boats that go to Bluefields left one boat destroyed, five dead, 16 wounded (a friend,

*In These Times* is an independent newspaper committed to democratic pluralism and to helping build a popular movement for socialism in the United States. Our pages are open to a wide range of views on the left, both socialist and non-socialist. Except for editorial statements appearing on the editorial page, opinions expressed in columns and in feature or news stories are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the editors. We welcome comments and opinion pieces from our readers.

a U.S. doctor, survived the second attack unharmed). An attack on trucks carrying relatives to visit an army camp left eight mothers dead, 16 civilians wounded. Most were shot as they tried to escape, which means that the *contra* knew they were shooting unarmed civilians, and knew that most were elderly women.

Meanwhile, Reagan talks of his "freedom fighters'" glorious campaign for democracy. There are moments when people here are just stunned by it, unable to understand how the U.S. has managed to stand reality on its head. Talking of the new rumors of invasion, one of my friends just stared ahead, shaking her head. "Why can't they just leave us alone," she whispered. Her two-year-old son is sick, hospitalized for intestinal problems, in a hospital critically short of medicine and everything else. Elective surgery has virtually halted because there are no spare parts for the air conditioners in the operating rooms, among other problems. And contagious diseases are on the rise, due to the war, the shortage of medicine and the shortage of people to mount the educational campaigns so necessary to health care here.

I could go on for pages with similar stories. Instead, I want to ask for help, but with more urgency than I've used in the past. I see two tasks: stop the war and help Nicaragua survive. The first is political: write and call Congress, join solidarity groups, join the pledge of resistance (the group organizing sit-ins and other protests). The second is financial: the dollar goes a long, long way here, and one of the things we have access to, more than people from any other country, is dollars. For the first time, I'm making a plea to my friends to help me raise money for Nicaragua. My first project is to raise \$1,000 to keep the Matiguás school running. The second will be to help build the farming cooperative I described earlier. From there—well, there's no shortage of critical needs, if there's money to spare.

For those who feel more comfortable donating money to established programs, I suggest an international campaign called Let Nicaragua Live, which is raising money to buy specific goods that Nicaragua has requested:

Let Nicaragua Live/HAND  
c/o Nicaragua Network  
2025 I Street, NW, Suite 1117  
Washington, DC 20006

For those interested in helping me with my campaign, please send donations to my parents, who will act as bankers and send the money to me here:

Bernard and Lillian Stephens  
28 Amherst Road  
Albertson, NY 11507

I'll send a full accounting and updates on the projects to each donor.

I've always felt uncomfortable asking

my friends for help. I know many of you are already over your heads in obligations. But what makes me most uncomfortable now is the fear that one day I'll look back on a destroyed Nicaragua and think I could have done more.

Beth Stephens  
Managua

*Editor's note: Beth Stephens is a former In These Times correspondent in Managua.*

## AIDS

HARDLY A DAY GOES BY WHEN THE news media fails to report that a Hollywood actor or a Pennsylvania truck driver has contracted AIDS. And as the death count mounts, the hysteria increases and anti-gay rhetoric is heard more and more. Recently, a community on Manhattan's Upper West Side prevailed on a local church to abandon its plans to shelter AIDS victims.

Some will blame the news media for blowing the AIDS epidemic out of proportion and thereby fueling anti-gay sentiment, but I disagree. Most newscasters are liberal, and most of them sympathize with AIDS victims. I believe they have dramatized the tragedy to attract attention and thereby create a climate for greater funding.

Gay complaints of civil liberties violations are valid and justified, but the main task is to find a cure for this dread disease. Perhaps a compromise can be reached on the need to obtain as much information as possible and at the same time respect victims' rights to privacy. We need federal research dollars in massive amounts. We also need to encourage greater contributions from private sources. Perhaps we can ask insurance executives who complain of excessive payouts to contribute to their enlightened self-interest and donate a portion of their profits. The pace of experimentation must be sped up and we must use animals, despite protests of animal rights groups. I would like to see greater cooperation between gay community leaders and public health officials.

If the scourge of AIDS is to be wiped off the face of the earth, we will need all the mental, spiritual and financial resources that can be mustered. Fighting among ourselves will not help.

Martin Celnick  
Scarsdale, N.Y.

## Refreshing

YOUR COVERAGE OF SOUTH AFRICA IS refreshingly intelligent. It's great to see someone is attempting to discuss the very complex situation and possible solutions and directions we and blacks in South Af-

rica must take, rather than just reporting how many people have been arrested or killed in the current unrest.

Joanne Brion  
San Francisco

## Toxic

RICHARD ASINOF AND MARVIN RESETNICK should be congratulated for their excellent article on the "Superfund" toxic waste battle (*ITT*, Aug. 21). Creation of an adequate program for cleaning up abandoned toxic waste sites and keeping them from poisoning the ground water is essential to preserving the material basis for our society. With the General Accounting Office now estimating that up to 378,000 waste sites may eventually be discovered, the time to press for an adequate Superfund law is now.

One aspect of the story that Asinof and Resetnick covered well, but which could have used more elaboration, concerns the efforts of Rep. Dennis Eckart (D-OH) to undermine the environmental movement's toxic waste bill in favor of his own, far weaker proposal. Environmental lobbyists say that Eckart gutted Superfund this year partly out of a desire to broker between them and industry, and partly to forge a centrist coalition of Republicans and "moderate" Democrats on this issue that would be immune to attacks from the right. Hoping to emerge a hero on the issue, he instead gave away the store on Superfunds.

Eckart is also responsible, along with Rep. John Dingell (D-MI), for sabotaging progress on acid rain controls last year. Eckart's motive in the 1984 acid rain debate was reportedly to avoid antagonizing Ohio utility and coal interests; Dingell's seem to have involved preventing an acid rain bill that would slap new emissions controls (for acid-producing nitrate and nitrite pollution) on Detroit's cars. These two Democrats, out of a desire to mollify the corporations, have twice betrayed the environment in the course of two years. Their capitulation to polluters dramatizes the weakness and ineptitude of liberals in the face of economic crisis.

To the extent that Dingell and Eckart undermined Superfund and acid rain controls to save Midwestern jobs, of course, their acts also suggest the environmental bankruptcy of a capitalist economy that forces whole states to choose between high unemployment and industrially induced cancer. How long can such a system continue in place without poisoning all of us?

John Andrews  
Washington, D.C.

## Corrections

IN THE "INSIDE STORY," ON PAGE TWO, OF the September 4 *In These Times*, three states are mentioned where Citizen Action has tried to be more a part of the established Democratic Party. The sentence should have read: "...establishment; in states such as Illinois, Ohio and California the statewide groups..." In the page nine "In the World" article in the same issue, Chile's coastline should have been described as 2,600 miles long.

by Nicole Hollander

SYLVIA



I DREAMT the President told me he was going to replace "AFFIRMATIVE ACTION" REQUIREMENTS WITH A POLICY OF "CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT," BECAUSE it WAS WORKING SO WELL IN SOUTH AFRICA.

© 1985 by Nicole Hollander

Nicole Hollander



## PERSPECTIVE

*Interview with Comandante de la Revolución Tomás Borge Martínez, sole surviving founder of the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN), and currently Minister of the Interior of Nicaragua, conducted at his home on May 5, 1985.*

**You have gone beyond calls for alliances between Christians and Marxists to advocate genuine integration of the two.**

Yes, though not so much a convergence between Marxists and Christians as a convergence of Marxists and Christians with the people. That is, a political identification, or a common engagement in practical terms. Our peoples are economically underdeveloped, and though they have an instinct for truth, they are also intellectually underdeveloped. I believe our mutual task is to help them—at the same time as we learn from them—find the path of their own liberation.

Experience has shown that events can bring human beings together independently of their philosophical viewpoints, uniting them on the common ground of struggle, on the common ground of economic, political and social transformation and in confrontation with the powers of the world that try to frustrate their development. In the last few years, the emergence of a popular Christianity and the transcending of dogmatic Marxist theses have facilitated a convergence between Marxists and other revolutionaries on the common ground of social transformation.

In Nicaragua, the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional encompasses both Christians and Marxists. Its basic statute assures full rights of membership to Christians, and there are several Catholic priests as well as members of other denominations in the party congress. All that is required is dedication to the country and the revolution. There is no requirement to hold Marxist views.

**Nicaragua recently signed an international treaty banning the use of torture and establishing procedures for international verification, which the U.S. and the other Central American countries—with the exception of Costa Rica—have refused to sign. You have also pioneered in abolishing the death penalty in the midst of a revolution and in setting up open prisons in which the inmates elect their own leadership.**

We have to go beyond mere negative human rights. Human rights involve more than not torturing, not murdering. Yet within this narrower ground—which is perhaps most easily perceived and most publicized—we have laid out a comprehensive strategy through the Ministry of the Interior.

First, we aspire to create a penitentiary system that will be the most humane in the world—which is not to say there could be a system as humane, but not *more* humane, than ours. The significance for us is twofold: to fulfill a revolutionary objective and to set an example to the rest of the world—especially for a society as developed as the United States.

I sent the chief of our penitentiary system to the United States to visit U.S. jails, and if there is a place in the world where prisoners are treated with exceptional cruelty, it is there. I'm not speaking of the brutality of individual guards, but of how the system institutionalizes cruelty in the treatment of prisoners. We would like to institutionalize generosity.

The greatest constraint on us in Nicaragua is material. The things we haven't done for a better prison system have been the result of lack of resources, not of political will. Even the half dozen "open farms" are constrained for lack of resources. We would like the prisoners on those farms to be living better, but we are under budgetary constraints that preclude building more suitable facilities.

Nicaragua's Minister of the Interior Tomás Borge Martínez



## Tomás Borge talks about the revolution

And likewise for developing their productive work.

Nevertheless, the salient characteristic of these farms is that the prisoners elect their own leadership, and that there is no armed presence on the sites. If they wanted to, the prisoners could walk off, but they never do. As we've told them, our principal sentinel is the trust we've placed in them as human beings in spite of their delinquency.

Torture in our country has been almost completely eradicated. I say *almost* because there are occasional instances of maltreatment—not exactly torture but of physical abuse—against some prisoners, especially in the war zones. This hardly happens anymore in Managua or in the centers closest to our vigilance, but instances still occur in the war zones when an enemy prisoner is captured. In a few cases, prisoners have even been murdered, especially on the Atlantic coast, which is the most isolated region of the country.

There, in an earlier period, acts of violence were carried out against captured prisoners and in some cases against the population of the region. Some—but only some—of the accusations have been made of violence against the inhabitants of the Atlantic coast, and especially against the Miskitos, have been true. But this did not correspond to the political will of the revolution, and there are about 500 *compañeros* who are now imprisoned, having been found guilty of committing such abuses.

I have often been asked about the Social Christian or Conservative prisoners, yet no one asks how many Catholic prisoners there are or how many Sandinista prisoners. In fact, no one has been detained for being a Social Christian or a Conservative, just as no one has been detained for being a Catholic or a Sandinista. All arrests have been for violating the law. Yet by this other line of reasoning, whoever is arrested for selling marijuana and hap-

pens to belong to the Social Christian Party must therefore have been imprisoned for being a Social Christian. In fact, there are 6,000 or 7,000 Catholic prisoners in Nicaragua, along with who knows how many Sandinista prisoners—500 or 600 *compañeros* of the Frente Sandinista, *compañeros* of the army, *compañeros* of the Ministry of the Interior. We have severely penalized *compañeros* who have violated the legal norms of the country, who have disregarded revolutionary principles of respect for human rights.

Further, we uphold a comprehensive vision of human rights. The efforts the revolution is making on all fronts, and notably in health and education, in my judgment represent concrete ways of developing a wholesome environment of respect for human rights. Conversely, when a government reduces expenditures for protecting children, elders and invalids, they violate human rights, especially when the social expenditures that have been taken from them are earmarked for violence, for war, for the purchase of arms.

In Latin America, oppressive governments engage in murder, rape and torture and they imprison their opponents. But their contempt for their peoples' health is their most basic violation of human rights. Of every 1,000 infants, 125 used to die here in Nicaragua. Now the revolution—despite its poverty—has reduced the mortality rate. It has been almost halved. I believe this is a concrete way of *defending the life* of human beings, by increasing levels of medical assistance, particularly for children.

There is no shred of respect for human rights in the pious miseries of the big cities of Latin America, where governments—including those possessing considerable wealth—appropriate resources for corruption or for astonishing luxury or for armaments, and neglect to build housing for their city-dwellers. Despite tremendous

economic constraints, we have made a serious effort to build houses. Since we lack the resources for construction in sufficient quantities, we have turned over the best lands in Managua and other cities to the people, so that with government help they may put up housing with their own resources. And, unlike demagogical populist and dictatorial governments of Latin America, we give priority to constructing housing in rural areas—where news media cameras seldom venture, but where it meets the needs of a social sector that has always been marginalized.

**With regard to Marxism, your official biographical summary lists the works of Marx, Gramsci and Peruvian revolutionary Mariátegui among your favorite books. Which has affected you most?**

The Bible would have to come first. The most basic influence on the development of a revolutionary is moral, not theoretical or ideological. Sure, I've read Marx, just as I've read Lenin, Mariátegui and Trotsky. But the work that helped me most in my revolutionary development was the work of Karl May, not Karl Marx. May was a German novelist who wrote about the North American West and whose characters were archetypes of what a revolutionary should be—at least for me at that time. They were honest, noble, loyal, brave defenders of the poor.

Youth is not attracted to theory as much as to moral examples and achievements. Our youth—the new generation forged in the struggle of the Frente Sandinista—have the example of Sandino, and of the great fighters of the Frente Sandinista, like Julio Buitrago, who singlehandedly fought entire units of Somoza's army and died in defense of his principles. They also have the example of Rigoberto López Pérez—who assassinated the first Somoza. All this contributed to the incorporation of our youth into the revolutionary process.

The study of theory provides a more serious content later. But the moral aspect comes first, though I do not disparage ideological perspectives. I should also mention the influence of St. Francis of Assisi, cultivated in my conscience during my childhood and adolescence by my mother. That is what led me to the revolution. Afterwards came philosophy, economics, political science, which, as a revolutionary and then as a revolutionary leader, I became obligated to understand.

**How do you envision your newly-delegated responsibility for the process of establishing autonomy for the Atlantic coast within the framework of national sovereignty?**

The autonomy project is still undergoing study, but its basic principles have been worked out. First, we have the will to carry forth a plan of autonomy for the inhabitants of the Atlantic coast that will recognize their rights as equal to those of the rest of the population. For example, there are various population groups—the Miskitos, Sumos, Ramas, Garifanos, Creoles (blacks), etc.—that have their own characteristics, including their own languages. Some of these groups are now very small, but others have considerable populations.

The Atlantic coast, which geographically comprises more than half the country, contains no more than 10 percent of the population of Nicaragua. It has been marginalized throughout our history, and so has developed an historical suspicion of "the Spaniards" of the Pacific. People from the Pacific always came to the Atlantic to exploit the population; the Atlantic coast was a kind of colony. None of its rights have ever been recognized.

The inhabitants of the Atlantic coast are now establishing their own rights: the right to possess land, the right to preserve their languages, the right to be respected

*Continued on page 22*



# TECHNOTRENDS

By John B. Judis

**H**ERBERT HOOVER IS NOW REMEMBERED as a laissez-faire conservative, but his greatest contribution as the Secretary of Commerce in the Harding and Coolidge administrations was to introduce industry-wide planning under government supervision. Hoover persuaded businesses within specific industries to standardize their products and parts so as to eliminate waste and cut costs. Hoover's innovation made the industrial revolution commercially viable.

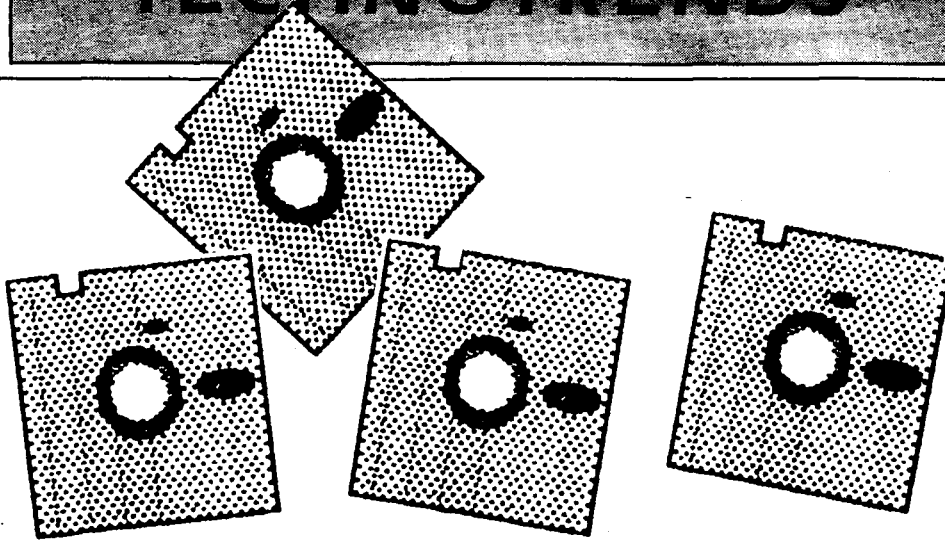
Since the mid-'70s, when the first personal computers were introduced, the computer industry has been moving toward standardization—not, however, through the injunctions of an enlightened secretary of commerce but through the clout wielded by the largest American computer-maker, IBM.

In the first years of the home computer, each of the main companies—Apple, Atari, Commodore and Tandy—made products that were commercially unique. One could not buy Atari programs or accessories for an Apple and vice versa. But the entrance of IBM into the personal computer field in 1981 created a standardization crisis that is still rocking the industry.

IBM produced a machine whose operating system could be copied closely enough so that other companies could make "IBM compatibles"—machines that ran the same programs that an IBM did. By doing this, IBM was encouraging software and hardware program producers to design their products for IBM rather than for its more exclusive rivals. IBM also adopted an "open architecture" in its computer: any owner could open it and install modems, memory boards or other hardware devices that companies decided to make for the IBM.

The strategy worked. When IBM introduced the PC, there were thousands of Apple programs and only a few programs that could work on the IBM. But since then, most of the innovative word processing, spreadsheet and database programs, as well as most of the new disk and memory technology, have been designed for the IBM and the IBM compatibles.

It has paid off financially for IBM. While Apple still dominates the market in educational computers, IBM and IBM compatibles can claim over 90 percent of the market in personal computers for business.



## Standardization imposed by IBM impedes innovation

But while the IBM-imposed standardization has benefited software production and lowered the costs of both computers and programs to consumers, it has had some negative effects.

Within the American industry, IBM is eight times larger than the next largest computer-producers, and 25 times larger than Apple. This has put IBM in a position of virtual market dominance. What IBM does becomes standard regardless of whether it is better, and this near guarantee of success has made IBM technologically conservative compared to the smaller companies.

This was evident in the case of the IBM PC, which, when it was introduced in 1981, was by no means a better machine than other available machines. But the expectation that IBM would come to dominate the market influenced the choice of businesses that were introducing computers. Both the IBM keyboard—now improved, but significantly inferior to the old Selectric keyboard—and the IBM disk operating system—DOS—became industry standards. Computers that were superior on merit but not compatible with the IBM system could not compete.

One of the most interesting cases is that of the Victor 9000, which, introduced soon after the IBM PC, was recognized as its clear superior. In *The Word Processing Book*, Peter McWilliams described the Victor 9000 as a "state of the art personal computer."

Like the IBM, it was a 16 rather than an eight-bit machine that ran on Micro-

soft's DOS. But its keyboard was not cramped, its screen was brighter and clearer than IBM's and its floppy disks held 1.2 Megabytes rather than 360K (roughly the difference between 200,000 and 50,000 words).

But Victor had two disadvantages: an operating system that could not run IBM-compatible software and a marketing corps that could not compete with IBM's legions. Last year, Victor went bankrupt, just before IBM introduced its new AT model, with—surprise!—a 1.2 MB disk drive.

### Taking risks

Companies that want to crack the lucrative business market can pursue either a low, high or very high risk strategy. The low risk strategy, pursued by companies like Compaq, is to build virtually the same machine as IBM, but make it work slightly better and charge either the same or less than IBM. Most industry experts agree that Compaq's new 286 model is a better machine than IBM's PC AT.

Or companies can try to introduce entirely new—and temporarily incompatible—features in the hope that IBM will eventually adopt those innovations and make them standard. Thus, several companies, including Data General, Kaypro and Apricot (see accompanying story), are now producing computers that use Sony's three-and-a-half-inch floppy disks. These disks store twice as much information as the standard five-and-a-quarter-inch floppies and they are virtually indestructible. Rumors have it that IBM will adopt these disks in their new portable.

Or companies can produce machines that are entirely incompatible with IBM but that improve dramatically upon IBM's 16-bit operating system. This is the very high risk strategy pursued by Apple with its Macintosh and by Commodore with its new Amiga. Firms that do this must not only be able to produce products that are markedly superior to IBM's; they must also be prepared either to carve out a specialized market or to compete on the same turf with IBM's name and marketing power.

And they can't simply hope to build up sales over a several-year period. Unless they make a big splash right away, independent software and hardware companies will not be interested in making products for their machines.

Apple has already had to abandon its attempt to win over IBM's corporate clients. The Macintosh excels on some fronts—like graphics and ease of use—and matches IBM's word processing or spreadsheet capability. But its sales were not increasing rapidly enough to attract software developers. To salvage the Macintosh, Apple is now trying to target small businesses. It might be too late.

With its Amiga, Commodore is trying a more modest strategy. From early reports, the Amiga appears to represent a substantial breakthrough in personal com-

puter technology, particularly in graphics and sound capability. It can literally paint a picture. But Commodore will not try to cut into IBM's business market. Instead, it will try to find a niche among home hobbyists and architectural and advertising firms. But with the home hobby market drying up, Commodore may not be able to find enough business for its new product.

If the Macintosh and the Amiga fail to catch on, their failure will certainly discourage further companies from pursuing a very-high risk strategy. But it is only by taking these kinds of risks that important breakthroughs are made in computer technology.

### Breaking up IBM?

What's to be done? It is not clear anything can be. As far as consumers are concerned, the present situation is preferable to the autarky of the early Apple-Atari days.

But by discouraging high risk strategies, IBM's monopoly of the personal computer market is slowing rather than accelerating technological innovation. It would probably be better if there were several other giants who could compete with IBM—and force innovations upon it. But if the Naderites were to get their wish and break IBM into a number of small or even medium-size companies, then the American computer industry might face the same dilemma that the more modest-sized semiconductor industry has had to face.

Sperry, Data General, and even Apple could then hold their own against IBM, but none of them could hold their own against the giant Japanese companies, which are aided by an aggressive national trade policy. We might end up looking to NEC for our computers the way we now look to Toyota for our cars and Sony for our televisions.

Of course, there is another side to this. If IBM's market dominance continues to slow rather than speed technological innovation, then the Japanese firms may win out anyway.

Where is Herbert Hoover now that we need him?

*"Technotrends" will appear regularly and will cover both the new computer products and the economic and social effects of computer technology. Authors with proposals for columns should write, not call, "Technotrends," In These Times.*

## Apricot: Better but doomed

The British computer producer, ACT, has recently introduced the Apricot into the American market. In doing so, ACT is bucking IBM's control not only of the market but of hardware and software standards. The Apricot PC sells for about \$500 less than the IBM PC and is, on most counts, a superior machine. It works faster, it has a better monitor, it displays graphics and allows the user to "draw." And instead of two 360K capacity, five-and-a-quarter-inch floppy disks, it has two 720K capacity three-and-a-half-inch disks.

But the prospects that Apricot will capture a good share of the American market are slim. Because the Apricot keyboard is slightly different from IBM's, software programs made for the IBM have to be specially adjusted for the Apricot. And with the three-and-a-half-inch disks, the Apricot owner cannot take his or her floppies home from work and plug them into a home computer.

Apricot's fate was sealed in a recent *InfoWorld* review. While noting that the machine's "screen, keyboard and



operating performance are all good," *InfoWorld* complained that it "strays far from the IBM fold." As a result, the Apricot received a two out of four star rating—a virtual kiss of death—from *InfoWorld's* reviewers. And further evidence of IBM's market dominance.

—J.B.J.

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## The War Diaries of Jean-Paul Sartre

By Jean-Paul Sartre  
Pantheon, 366 pp., \$17.95

By Diana Johnstone

IT WAS THE PHONEY WAR. AND there on the quiet Alsatian front was Jean Paul Sartre, a most unlikely soldier, madly filling notebook after notebook with thoughts on how to achieve "authenticity." To find Sartrean authenticity emerging from the Phoney War is reason enough to savor *The War Diaries*.

This translation by Quintin Hoare includes only five of the 14 notebooks (the others are missing) Sartre filled between Sept. 14, 1939, a fortnight after World War II broke out, and March 28, 1940.

In addition, he was writing letters daily to his mother, Simone de Beauvoir and other friends, working on his novel *The Age of Reason*, devouring volumes of fiction and history and, incidentally, carrying out his military duties of weather observation, which can't have been too onerous. The amount of reading and writing Sartre could cram into a day is staggering, and it's first-rate stuff, Sartre in the throes of intellectual discovery, when the world was young.

However unsuited to army life, Sartre "assumed" the war and this marked a turning point in his thinking. "The war and Heidegger put me on the right path," he noted in March 1940.

### In the company of men

Sartre always sought the company of women and didn't like men, but there he was stuck with male company. He played the "moral clown." He related to the other men by observing their moral behavior, that is, their systems of self-deception and self-justification, and offering criticism. "I amuse myself by teaching them freedom." This was field study for his philosophical work.

Exploration of his key concept "authenticity" fed on what he had recently absorbed from philosopher Martin Heidegger and on observing the inauthentic ways of his comrades. (Although it is his own inauthenticity that really bothered him.) On the most ordinary level, he objected to the soldierly habit of passive griping, the complaints of men who neither revolt nor accept responsibility for what they go along with.

"Only those men who have accepted to be the martyrs of peace do not deserve war," he wrote harshly. And later on, "The further I go, the more I see that men deserve war.... This war—we have all declared it at one moment or another. But then instead of paying for it, instead of saying, 'It's my war' and trying to live it, they all take refuge from it in poses. They refuse it with bad faith, exactly as one refuses a fault one has just committed. They cover it over with a veil of *natural* and *normal*. And when peace comes, all those bastards will by turns benefit from the innocent victim's aureole and from the war veteran's laurels."

Heidegger's influence came along to "teach me authenticity and historicity just at the very moment when war was about to make these notions indispensable to me."

"...For Heidegger's philosophy is a free assumption of his epoch. And his epoch was precisely a tragic epoch of *Untergang* and de-



## DIARIES

# Sartre on authenticity and the Phony War

spair for Germany.... So I can rediscover Heidegger's assumption of his destiny as a German, in that wretched Germany of the postwar years, in order to help me assume my destiny as a Frenchman in the France of '40."

France was in for a more humiliating destiny than he then realized. The *Diaries* are also a precious document on the illusions of the Phoney War. Sartre observed the low morale of French soldiers, their vandalistic looting of evacuated Alsatian farmhouses, but rejoiced at the "dissolution of the military spirit" in France as a sign that war, in industrial society, was being "civilized."

He was aware that in Germany the spirit was entirely different. "If, however, I place my hopes in a final victory of the pluto democracies, I'm relying not on their heroism, but on their wealth. I'm reckoning on a war without 'greatness'—principally economic. In that case, 'decadence' can remain harmless—indeed becomes a positive factor."

The relatively few pages of the diary dealing with the war itself are illuminating. Sartre grasped perfectly why Britain and France could appease Hitler's demands on Czechoslovakia at Munich in 1938 and then declare war on Germany over Hitler's aggression against Poland the next year. "It's the bourgeoisie which prevented war in '38 and decided the capitulation at Munich, from fear of victory even more than of defeat; it was afraid war might benefit communism."

"In September '39, on the other hand, war was welcomed by the bourgeoisie—because the Russo-German treaty discredited communism; and because everyone now realizes that this war, which is being waged directly or indirectly against the Soviets, will necessarily be accompanied by a police operation domestically. The Communist Party will be dissolved. What 10 years of politics haven't been able to achieve, the war will achieve in a month. Such,

it seems to me, is the main reason why the bourgeoisie rallied to the war.

"Beneath its trappings of a national war, it's to a great extent a civil war. ...War in '38 could have been the occasion for a revolution—in '40 it's the occasion for a counterrevolution. The war of '38 would have been a 'left' war that, of '39 is a 'right' war. Hitler's blunder was not to see that, in '38, the capitalist democracies were defending themselves on two

"I can rediscover [the German philosopher] Heidegger's assumption of his destiny as a German, in that wretched Germany of the postwar years, in order to help me assume my destiny as a Frenchman in the France of '40."

fronts, threatened in their imperialism by Nazi ambitions, they were threatened in their inner constitution by Communist action. They didn't want war, lest they should have to defend themselves on two fronts at once. By making a common front with Stalin, Hitler relieves them by allowing them to expel communism—henceforth viewed as an *external* danger."

In a propagandistic terminology of the time, the war became one between the "proletarian peoples" (Germany, Russia) and the "pluto democracies" (the rich Atlantic imperial democracies). It was believed in France that France and England, connected by the Atlantic Ocean to the U.S., were in position to win a war of attrition. The strains of war effort would defeat the encircled German economy, causing it to collapse from within.

The inaction on the Western front known as the Phoney War, while Germany and the USSR polished off Poland and Finland to the East, was understood in France as part of the economic war. World War I's stagnant trench warfare had shown (shown the French, that is) that modern industrial nations' strong defenses had rendered offensive war useless.

The specter of total war was thought to be an effective deterrent. The defensive posture behind the Maginot Line was all the more comfortable for the French in that they had got all the territory they wanted from the previous war. "Thus the French armies on the German frontier have no purpose other than to force Germany to adopt a war economy destined to make their blockade effective," Sartre wrote.

### False allies

As the months passed, however, Sartre noted the falseness of the allied assumption that "time is on our side." The Germans were consolidating gains to the East and in Scandinavia, while limiting their activity along French lines to protesting their desires for peace. "Most of the men are fairly receptive to the Hitler propaganda. They're getting bored, 'morale' is sinking," Sartre noted.

The French from the start "weren't sustained by any patriotic or ideological ideal. They didn't like Hitlerism, but they weren't wild about democracy either—and they didn't give a bugger about Poland. Into the bargain, they had the vague impression of having been tricked."

Called up by the general mobilization at the age of 34, shortly after his first success as a novelist with *Nausea*, Sartre himself rallied to the war out of dislike for Nazism and as a bourgeois of a particular type: a member of the French teaching civil service. For the first time, he examined himself thoroughly, situating his freedom in his specific history. His family background of public service was favorable to a certain kind of individualism, a disinterest in property ownership, a great liberty of personal behavior backed by certainty that the paycheck would arrive monthly until the end of one's days.

Sartre acknowledged that he was "truly what the Nazis call 'the abstract man of the plutocracies.'" and added: "I have no liking for this character, and I want to change. What I have realized is that freedom is not the Stoic detachment from loves and goods at all. On the contrary, it supposes a deep rootedness in the world." ■



## Lesbians Nuns: Breaking Silence

By Rosemary Curb and Nancy Manahan

Naiad Press, 383 pp, \$9.95

By Laura Cottingham

LESBIAN BOOKS, FICTION and nonfiction, seldom attract attention. But *Lesbian Nuns: Breaking Silence* has piqued curiosity and condemnation in mainstream, Catholic and feminist circles alike, making it the most controversial lesbian book since Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* went on trial for obscenity in 1928. A collection of 50 autobiographical stories written by nuns and ex-nuns and published by a small Florida-based press, *Lesbian Nuns* has received national attention far beyond anything Naiad would have predicted given the meager response to its other 60 volumes during the past 12 years.

The book's editors, former nuns Rosemary Curb and Nancy Manahan, have appeared on radio and TV programs in every major American city, including the Phil Donahue show. Dozens of newspapers and magazines—including the *New York Times* and *Newsweek*—have printed stories.

In Boston, Channel 4 (NBC) canceled an interview with the editors after an archdiocese spokesman announced the program as "an affront to the sensitivity of Roman Catholics." Of course, any commotion the Catholic Church stirs up only adds to publicity. As Warner Books, the owner of paperback rights, told the *Times*: "We're not counting on controversy with the church, but it's there, it's there. And it's going to sell books."

Though church indignation is predictable and probably unavoidable, the feminist response is neither. Before the book's release, Naiad publisher Barbara Grier sold excerpt rights to *Forum*, part of Bob Guccione's *Penthouse* publishing empire. When this information appeared in the feminist monthly *off our backs*, readers were quick to show their anger and feelings of betrayal.

The most severe and extensive reprimands came from the contributors themselves, who were not informed of Naiad's plans to serialize in *Forum*: many said they would not have agreed to appear in the anthology if they had known. Grier did little to allay the anger, claiming she gave *Forum* the excerpts so *Lesbian Nuns* "could reach women we wouldn't otherwise reach."

### Far from sensational

But despite all the sensationalism surrounding the book, it's far from sensational. None of the stories indicts the Church or resembles pornography or does anything else that would explain why *Lesbian Nuns* is on its way to the pages of *Forum* and the best-seller list. Such mass-market popularity attests to America's ignorance about both lesbians and nuns: to most readers, the title probably sounds oxymoronic or even naughty.

Actually, *Lesbian Nuns* fits into a genre of books that started appearing in the late '60s: homosexual "coming out" anthologies. Books in this genre include Margaret Cruikshank's *The Lesbian Path* (1980), which contains the stories of two former nuns: Rosemary Curb and Nancy Manahan. Cruikshank introduced the

two women and encouraged them to begin a project that became, after communication with several hundred lesbian nuns and ex-nuns, *Lesbian Nuns: Breaking Silence*.

The women who contributed to this collection tried unsuccessfully to reconcile their beliefs, needs and sexuality with Catholic dogma. Most of them terminated their vows, and many abandoned Catholicism and organized religion altogether.

One woman writes: "The very setting which could have fostered

women loving women prohibited its strongest bonding force. We could have had power as women together, but the flaw in the scenario, what prevented the convent from the fullest realization of its potential as a separatist society, was sex. Homophobia operated in the convent with even more force than in society at large."

Another nun remembers: "I decided to leave the cloister because of the radical changes made by the ecumenical movement and Pope John XXIII...and my lesbianism

was coming to an uncontrollable point. I wanted to have a physical relationship with a woman, and I could not do it because of my respect for my vows."

Although the voices in *Lesbian Nuns* speak from particularly sexually repressed experiences—most were raised Catholic, all took vows of celibacy—the individual recognitions of lesbianism sound a lot like any other woman's movement toward lesbian self-identity. Becoming a lesbian is a struggle for all women who arrive at that self-definition. No matter at what age a woman recognizes her same-sex attractions, she has to first find a name for her feelings and then choose to identify herself in opposition to assumed heterosexuality—or in the case of the nuns, enforced asexuality.

As Rosemary Curb observes about her sister contributors, the acknowledgement of lesbian desire or identity sometimes takes years. "On the average," she writes, "we discovered ourselves as Lesbians in our mid-30s—usually only after we had several intimate relationships with women either in or out of the convent." Or as one nun, still living her vows, puts it: "In junior high and high school, I felt an attraction toward some girlfriends: I wanted to be with them, walk them home, carry their books, go on dates, call them on the telephone, give them

*Naiad publisher Grier sold excerpt rights to Forum, part of the Penthouse empire. Many would not have agreed to be in the book if they had known.*

gifts...but if you asked me when I was 24 if I was a lesbian, I would have said, 'No.' Now, at 30, I say, 'Yes, definitely.'"

Another contributor writes, "'Homosexuality' was not part of my vocabulary until age 25. 'Lesbian' entered my vocabulary at age 32. I had been in love with a woman emotionally, romantically and sexually for six years at that point." Throughout the personal accounts, what surfaces again and again is the impossibility of knowing something—lesbianism—when there's no frame of reference, or even the word with which to name it.

The rules and customs of the different religious orders vary: some are strict (the book includes one account of self-flagellation), others comparatively liberal, especially after the breakdown of traditional Catholicism imposed by Vatican II. But all the orders described required a vow of celibacy. In taking the celibacy vow, only heterosexual behavior was assumed and warned against. Writing about the awakening of her sexual feelings, Coriander remembers thinking to herself: "Was I still celibate? If not, what was I doing in the convent? No one had

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ever said that celibacy meant not loving women."

If the testimony in *Lesbian Nuns* can be considered a fairly accurate sociological sampling, then mid-20th century American convents are a retreat for middle and working-class women who realize their life options come down to marriage and motherhood, working at the five-and-dime or the nunnery.

According to Nancy Manahan, most of the contributors entered religious life "to escape marriage, to receive an education and to live in a community of women." Or, as Sonja writes, "[My parents] couldn't afford to send me to college to become a physical education teacher, although my younger brother went. Girls studied typing, boys went to college. At least, if I went to the convent, I would get to go to college."

For many, the convent offered not only otherwise-impossible educational opportunities, but their only introduction to middle-class comfort as well. Kevyn remembers: "Here I had taken a vow of poverty and I had never eaten so well in my entire life...[my friend] was sent home because of her health. She had never eaten such good food. She overate and got an ulcer."

Donna parallels the convent for low-income women with the army "option" that exists for low-income men. She suggests that the women's movement should, like the peace movement, establish a counter-recruitment program for young women that would stress alternative job and educational opportunities.

*Lesbian Nuns* isn't the single voice of one author—it's a collection of many voices. But what do all these individual narratives hold in common? The book is about women overcoming the war waged

against sexual self-expression. The convent experience is really just a backdrop, albeit an interesting one.

And what of the nuns, lesbian and not—how will they react to this book? Two of the women who recount their experiences and use their real names are still nuns: how will this affect their social and religious positions? One sister predicts that "Lesbian nuns I know are going to dance! In convents this book will go around like hotcakes, just the way *The Hite Report* did in my community.... The book will also be an occasion for confronting a lot of pain. Lesbian sisters who are not out in their communities (and I don't know anyone who's out) will have to listen to homophobic reactions. But it will be a catalyst.

"All hell's going to break loose. Religious communities are going to have to discuss the book. They're going to have to respond to reality, and they've never had to do that."

Laura Cottingham is a columnist and a contributing editor for the *New York Native* and a regular contributor to *off our backs*. A longer version of this article appeared in the *Village Voice*.



Lesbian Nuns: Breaking Silence

*Lesbian Nuns is about women overcoming the war waged against sexual self-expression—the convent is just a backdrop.*



By David Feld

THREE SOUTH AFRICAN dancers whirl on stage while a Russian immigrant plays furiously on a synthesizer. Women in mini-skirts and chic hairdos sing about fallen freedom fighters. The gentle sounds of Zimbabwean marimbas segue into a torrid funk-and-soca dance number.

These are some of the sights and sounds of World Beat music, a growing movement in the San Francisco Bay area. World beat combines elements of various styles—African, Caribbean, funk, rock and salsa—into new forms of music as diverse as the bands which play under this banner. Add to this a definite political content, often explicit in the lyrics, certainly implicit in the bands' composition, cooperation and support of progressive causes, and the result is the most important development in Bay Area music since Jerry Garcia put on his first black t-shirt.

The groups comprising world beat range from the urban funk of the Freaky Executives to the Mbaganga pop of Zulu Spear. Most of the bands are relatively new, forming only within the past two years. During that period of time, they have gone from performing in front of small groups of friends to headlining at San Francisco's top clubs. This fall, the movement reaches a milestone with a day-long festival at the 9,000-seat Greek Theatre in Berkeley. In addition to the new bands, the festival will include steel drums, samba schools and African dance troupes. This is internationalism with a beat.

There are several sources of the world beat phenomenon. Within the Bay Area's eclectic musical community are various African performers; including Hedzoleh Soundz, a Ghanaian pop group, and Nigeria's Joni Haastrup. Other first-hand lessons in world music are provided by master drummer C.K. Ladzepko, who conducts classes in African music and dance.

Two of Ladzepko's pupils, Joe Gore and Robin Balliger, graduated into O.J. Ekemode's band Ashiko. Ekemode is a Nigerian juju musician and Ashiko was the prototype world beat band: a large ensemble, racially and sexually mixed, it includes electric guitars and bass, saxophones and trumpets, percussion and singers. The electric instruments played with the crispness of new wave, the horns sounded like the M.G.s on a field trip and underneath everything were the percolating rhythms of juju. (An album recorded in Nigeria and California, *Dance Afro-Beat*, released under the name Orlando Julius and Ashiko, is available from Afro-Beat Records, 2124 Kittridge, Box U, Berkeley, CA 94704.)

Gore and Balliger went on to form Big City. Many of the Ashiko elements remain, but the band now projects a leaner sound and song structure closer to rock than Afro-beat. Drums, percussion and Balliger's bass keep the dancers going, while twin guitars and steel drums add international accents. Gore is a remarkable guitarist, his fingers in constant motion, repeating short figures on the high notes, then adding rhythmic fills. His playing has the crystal, pin-point accuracy typical of African guitar styles.

Big City's songs range from the



ART &amp; ENTERTAINMENT

## MUSIC

## Bay Area hears a World Beat



Zulu Spear (top) and Big City are two of the most popular World Beat bands in the San Francisco area.

soca of "Fiesta in Caribe" to the haunting "Ghostdance," that concerns the search for justice for those who have fallen in struggle. With their new wave look and the striking presence of lead singer Kathleen Maguire, Big City probably stands the best chance of achieving major success of all the world beat bands.

### Rich cultural mix

Ashiko also included four South African dancers and singers. Having come to the U.S. as part of a

large troupe in 1980, they eventually formed their own band, Zulu Spear, whose music is based on the mbaganga sounds of Johannesburg. As lead singer Sechaba Mokoena says, "It's a music from all the people, Sothos, Zulus, whatever, getting together in the city. It's a city music. Like in the band, we have Japanese, Russian, black and white Americans, Africans."

The band's lyrics, in seven languages representing the major South African populations, concern the political situation in their

homeland, sung paradoxically in a sweet, gentle style. Traditional healing and celebration dances are performed to thundering electronic rock, a further incongruity that proves the health of world beat's cultural mix. After all, as Sechaba notes, "In South Africa, I listened to much rock, like Grand Funk, Uriah Heep, things like that."

Mapenzi's sound is also rooted in a particular African style, the marimba music of Zimbabwe's Shona people. The band was formed by Brett Stewart, a multi-instrumentalist who has studied with Zimbabwean master Dumi Magaire. Stewart uses the warm, wooden sound of the marimba—like tuned drops of water—as the basis for the joyful, heartfelt music of Mapenzi. A typical piece begins with rhythm and melody set by the marimbas; the bass drums join to emphasize the central beat; two guitars, then two basses, add simple figures in syncopation; finally, a ferocious drum roll signals the entry of the horns and the band is off on another journey.

The funk banner in the world beat brigade is carried by the Freaky Executives. A self-described "Berkeley neighborhood band," the Freakies are co-led by Pierro el Malo, a veteran of local salsa and son groups, and Scott Roberts, versed in jazz and pop. On stage, the two are a kind of interracial Mutt and Jeff, the much taller Roberts alternating lead vocals and percussion with Pierro. In music and stage presence, the band is reminiscent of The Time—tight, glistening funk rock, the 10 musicians dressed in black and white and choreographed down to the second.

### A hit in Managua

The Looters are the elder statesmen of the movement. Formed about three years ago, the band's name was inspired by the Brixton, London riots of that time. The group focused originally on reggae and Afro-beat, but gradually moved toward a stronger rock sound. With a heavy beat, African guitar riffs and anthemic choruses, the Looters often sound like a cross between the Clash and the Tom Tom Club.

Matt Callahan, one of the group's founders, remains very aware of his music's antecedents. "The world, through videos, through records, through tape re-

corders, has made it possible for musicians in Soweto, who have no rights at all but can play music and listen to music, to hear what I'm playing while I listen to what they're playing," he said. "What's new is not louder, faster rock'n'roll; what's new is a completely new synthesis of sounds."

In 1983, the Looters took their new synthesis to Nicaragua. As the first rock band to perform there since the revolution, they played four concerts to large crowds, including 30,000 in Managua. The reaction was enthusiastic. "We were mobbed," said Callahan. "We weren't used to being treated like rock stars. They were tearing off our clothes, rocking the van we were in. Everybody in the country knew our names. It was pretty wild."

At that time, the Looters were still barely known in the Bay Area. The world beat bands were playing in smaller venues like Berkeley's Ashkenaz and the punk dive Mabuhay Gardens. Gradually, as word spread, the shows became more popular. Then, Dave Robinson, known for his work with Santana and Herbie Hancock, became involved. He worked to shore up both the musical and financial health of the bands and helped produce the first world beat spectacular, a coming-out party at the 1,400-seat Kabuki Theatre. The concert sold out, prompting promoter Bill Graham to throw his weight behind the Greek Theatre festival. The bands are now looking at that gig, and a subsequent mini-festival at the Palace in Los Angeles, to spur interest from record companies.

It remains to be seen whether the critical, multi-racial world beat bands can survive within the recording industry. Regardless of the future of world beat, however, the movement's current strength indicates the continuing vitality and interrelationship of different cultural forms. As Callahan says, "The world is so full of people who have been thrown out of their houses, their lands, thrown out of their lives, people who have nothing that they can say really belongs to them except the music, except that feeling of life and wanting to live. That's what world beat music is for. 'World music is a conversation between people on the planet.'"

David Feld is an attorney who plays the guitar.



By Richard Miller

ON AUGUST 4, MORE than 25,000 people from across the country and a smattering of foreign citizens gathered in Washington, D.C., to wrap the Pentagon and the Capitol in The Ribbon—25,000 individually made 18-by-36 inch panels of fabric, depicting in personal tones what the person would "miss most in the event of a nuclear war." Although the peace celebration, as it was called by its organizers, stirred the emotions of thousands of Americans during the preparations over the last two years, it was not widely reported outside the Washington area.

But due to the vision and foresight of Nigel Noble, a New York documentary director, the event was captured on video tape and will be edited into an hour-long program that will permit a much wider audience to participate in and witness The Ribbon.

The Ribbon project was conceived by Justine Merritt, a 61-year-old teacher from Colorado, who had a dream of tying a ribbon of peace around the Pentagon to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. She spent thousands of hours over the course of two years traversing the country, spreading her message and involving other people who were concerned about the quality of a world shadowed by the threat of nuclear war. State coordinators were established to assemble the panels and arrange to transfer them to Washington.

"The entire project was a grassroots effort by the people of the United States," Noble explained, "and our video tape documentary paralleled the structure of The Ribbon—a project produced, directed and shot by the people of the U.S." His claim is not idle rhetoric, because the taping of the event, and the work leading up to the August celebration, was accomplished by hundreds of amateur videomakers around the country and a volunteer professional crew of about 50 people in Washington.

When Noble learned of The Ribbon project in March, he unsuccessfully attempted to raise about \$300,000 to produce a documentary. At one point, ready to scrap the project, he got a call from Merritt who told him how well things were progressing and the spirited feedback she was receiving. "She must have sensed my frustration," Noble explained, "and then as I was speaking to her I looked at the list of volunteer state coordinators and realized we could do the same thing for the video tape project."

#### Volunteer effort

He wrote to the state coordinators, asking them to contact local commercial or public television stations to provide them with any footage of Ribbon activities, as well as to collect any work done by home videomakers. The response was an avalanche. Tapes began to arrive from all around the country, in all formats—VHS, Beta, 3/4-inch, Betacam—shot by professionals, amateurs, first-timers. "We still are lacking some footage of the preparations of The Ribbon and the departure of some state delegations to intercut with the footage we shot in D.C., but we have assembled a vast array," Noble said.

To complement the footage documenting the early stages,

Noble envisioned assembling a group of technicians in Washington to tape the wrapping of the Pentagon and related events. To overcome the lack of funding, he turned to volunteerism, mirroring the spirit that propelled the making of each panel. "The same compelling spirit that drew people to make the panels seemed to attract and inspire technicians to work on the project," Noble

since the early '70s.) "We got a great reaction from the people in NABET, and all the other technicians and suppliers who contributed to this effort," said Noble, who is no stranger to this type of project. His Academy Award-winning *Close Harmony*, about an intergenerational chorus in Brooklyn, was comprised of NABET 15 members, many of whom also donated their time.

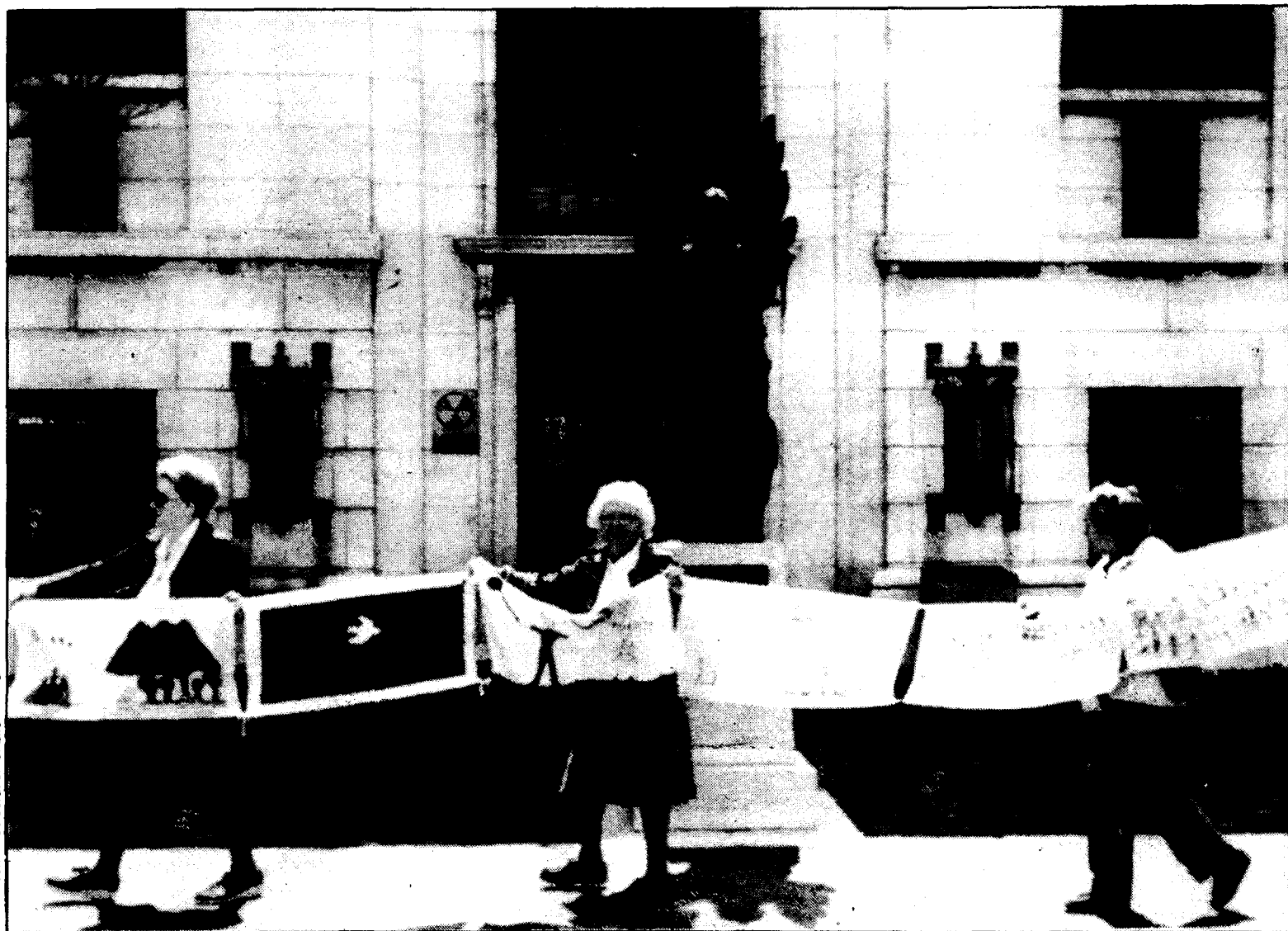
owned by Peter Cooper that has contributed space, phones and a video monitor. Citing the Cooper contribution, Noble said, "The project touched something inside of a lot of people, an urge to be part of something, to get involved, to contribute. It is surprising, particularly in an industry like ours (commercials) where so many people can become cynical and money is the dominant theme.

footage," Whitmore said. This may prove that it is not always essential that the footage be perfectly shot, he noted, and may presage a change in the way documentaries are produced. "It says to me, 'Don't be stifled by the lack of funds,'" Noble added.

One of the themes Noble hopes to communicate is how one committed person—Justine Merritt—can influence many people to pub-

## DOCUMENTARY

# Recording the Ribbon project



Individual Ribbon panels were displayed in towns across the country, providing a preview of the final product.

## The taping may presage a change in how documentaries are produced.

explained. "Justine's concept and vision touched many people deeply, who ordinarily find no way to express their concern about the nuclear threat that seems largely out of their control."

He procured the services of Hilary Raff, a freelance producer of commercials, to work as producer. For three months she volunteered her services, arranging the equipment, personnel and logistics. After hundreds of phone calls and letters, she found people who were interested in the project. "It was a very diverse crew that we put together," she explained. "The project itself inspired those who were willing to work for nothing—the idea of taping a confirmation of people who love the earth, a confirmation of comradeship."

The majority of the tape crews came from Washington, members of the National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians (NABET) Local 15. (Noble has been a member of the union

Something in the project affected people very deeply, according to Kit Whitmore, who has worked on commercials with Noble for many years and who served as camera coordinator for the project. "The personal statements on the ribbons and the service in the National Cathedral got everyone involved," he said. "I was struck by the emotions demonstrated in the panels and was really affected by the service."

Unlike most complicated, large-scale productions of this nature, Noble worked primarily with technicians about whose technical abilities or sensitivities he knew nothing. He assigned the crews around the Cathedral for the Saturday service and obtained detailed footage of the procession of 500 panels into the hall. On Sunday, he dispatched people around the city and then dashed from place to place, ensuring that everything was working right.

To parallel the emotions and feelings that the makers of The Ribbon put in to each panel, exposing their fears and hopes for a safer, saner world, Noble urged his technicians to do the same—take chances, expose themselves, risk tough shots. "And it paid off; we got some great work out of people."

The task of viewing all the footage is now underway at the offices of Cooper & Co., a New York-based commercial company

This proved that people want the opportunity to work on meaningful projects."

Much of the early footage of the documentary will be from the amateur, home video tapes which document the preliminary stages of The Ribbon. The climactic days in D.C. were shot by the professional crews. "A good deal of the program may be the less well-shot

lycally express their own hopes for nuclear disarmament and increased responsibility by government to achieve that end. He also demonstrates his own formidable powers of persuasion in having conceived, assembled and produced the taping of The Ribbon. ■

**Richard Miller** is a freelance writer and regional vice president of NABET.



Bhopal victims

## No Promise for Tomorrow: Communities Respond to the Bhopal Tragedy

The images are often blurry, the takes are leisurely and the edits clumsy. But for people working on toxics and health-and-safety issues, this hour-long discussion with people who live around chemical plants, in the wake of Bhopal, can be fascinating. People talk as much around the issue as about it, and contradict themselves within the same phrase. That's understandable: at the moment there are few avenues of action. Highlander, the community organizing center, produced this tape as a first step toward grassroots action, and has sent a copy to India as well, where it is being shown in public meetings. Video only; contact Highlander, Rte. 3, Box 370, New Market, TN 37820.

—Pat Aufderheide



# Reagan

Continued from page 3

on the road to nuclear arms reduction."

Such a verification agreement would involve a "broad array of inspection procedures, including inspection on their respective territories by the other side." The Kerry proposal must be a "living accord" that "can be constantly expanded and improved as our knowledge of verification is expanded. To that end, I propose that the accord provide for a joint U.S.-Soviet research effort, engaging the talents of the best scientific minds of both countries, to be directed at developing new generations of verification technology, rather than concentrating such research on unilateral efforts to develop new generations of weapons technology."

This proposal seems at least partly aimed at trying to invent an arms control verification pork barrel to substitute, even slightly, for the Star Wars and other arms build-up pork barrels. But it could be additional: each new arms system requires a new verification technique—a new frontier, indeed.

Since Reagan administration officials already claim—contrary to independent experts—that a nuclear test ban poses problems of verification, it is mind-boggling to think of all the problems they could find in verifying everything, which is what Kerry seems to be boldly suggesting. He said such an accord on verification would allow implementation of "the bilateral freeze on the testing, production and deployment of new weapons systems." By including "production" at this stage—instead of concentrating on the CTB, which poses no real verification problems—the freeze movement itself may have opened the Pandora's box of endless verification problems.

Kerry could make such a complicated proposal only because he stays within the conventions of mainstream American politics, which demand that one accept as gos-

pel the claims of the Reagan administration to be frustrated in its yearnings after an end to the arms race only by its sincere concern for verification. Otherwise, it would make more sense to press for a simple measure, like the CTB, while educating the public that verification is not a real obstacle—at the risk of exposing official U.S. hypocrisy.

This is something the officials of the Reagan administration don't mind exposing themselves, when it is useful. A case in point is the way they helped U.S. media to turn the Soviet nuclear arms testing into a "non-event"—a process Daniel Ellsberg observed and analyzed with some amazement. In so far as it has been mentioned, the Soviet moratorium has been often falsely described as an offer of a five-month moratorium, when in fact it is a real moratorium accompanied by an offer of permanent expansion.

The Soviet move was often buried in news stories under the official U.S. rejection or the U.S. counter-proposal to invite Soviet observers to ongoing U.S. tests. The clever gambit of top Reagan administration officials, Ellsberg noted, was to admit in their "not for attribution" background briefings to American media that their own counter-offer—come visit our tests—was nothing but cynical propaganda. The law of even-handedness then dictated that U.S. media treat both moves, the Soviet moratorium like the U.S. reply, as cynical propaganda...with the Soviets, naturally, more cynical.

## Bolivia

Continued from page 11

ganizing a general strike of mine workers to protest the military occupation of the mines. After he was released from jail, he helped organize the UDP and was a member of parliament for the Communists. But when the Communists failed to push for power in the UDP, he resigned his seat and

returned to work in the mines. He later helped organize the left-wing split in the Communist Party with Barrenechea.

"We are convinced," says Balcazar, "that the left could have been hegemonic in the UDP. But the problem is that the leaders disarmed and demobilized the masses. And the Communist Party leaders were responsible."

Now, he says, the left is in a period of reaccumulation of forces. "The right will try to suppress the labor movement to put into effect a program alien to the popular classes and the nation. What's needed is a front to put forward the needs of the workers, peasants and the people." Balcazar wants another UDP, but with the left in the lead.

### Deep divisions

Even if the left can sort itself out, the question remains whether it can lead the nation. Deeper divisions exist than the political differences. There is the cultural chasm that separates the *campesino* from the workers, the *mestizo* and the city dweller.

For example, Eloy Alvarado Quispe, a high school teacher in La Paz working on a college degree at the University San Andres (UMSA), is an Aymara Indian and a member of the Revolutionary Indian Movement for the Restoration of Kollasuyo. Kollasuyo was the name of the Bolivian region under the rule of the Incas before the Spanish conquest in 1532. That party is only one of several Indian parties, a couple of which have representatives in parliament. While Alvarado goes to meetings of both the Trotskyists and Communists, he says, "We don't believe in either the left or the right parties—we want the Indians to come to power."

Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, a woman of Indian descent, is a professor of sociology at UMSA, the author of two books on the Indian movements in Latin America and a sometime adviser to the Indian peasant union. She was formerly a member of the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR), but quit when she came to the conclusion that

the left-wing parties "do not represent the popular movements." She says, "They reproduce the domination of the old ruling caste. No leader of the left parties speaks either Quechua or Aymara."

Not surprisingly, the left has not won over the majority of Indians, nor does it have much influence among the large number of urban petty bourgeois. Antonio Fosarico, for example, stands beside his truck in the poor neighborhood of Alta Tacagua high on the mountainside above La Paz while three men shovel gravel into his truck from an open sewer ditch. He says, "I voted for Banzer and the ADN because I want order and authority. Things can't go on like this."

Most political observers here believe that Paz has no more than a few months to make his program work, and the left also has only that much time to organize itself because after the new year Banzer is expected to make his move.

**Dan La Botz** is a Chicago-based freelance journalist.

## Nicaragua

Continued from page 16

in their religious beliefs, the right to exploit lakes, ponds, rivers, woods. So autonomy in essence consists in recognizing the rights of these inhabitants. Among these rights are respect for—and the cultivation of—their languages.

In this connection, I'm going to establish a professorship in Managua to promote knowledge of the Miskito language. It isn't now possible to do the same with other languages—we don't have people who can teach the language—but Miskito, yes. So at least we in the Ministry of the Interior will study Miskito, as well as English. English because there is a certain region of the Atlantic coast, especially in South Zelaya, where people speak English. So we're going to learn English, to understand and to be understood by our compatriots of South Zelaya and to understand and to be understood by our brethren of the United States.

**Sergio Ramirez and Carlos Tunnermann** have on occasion spoken of the influence of the Revolution of 1776 on Sandinista thinking, and more generally on Latin American revolutionary thought.

The Nicaraguan Revolution is the most recent chapter of the world's revolutionary transformations. All preceding revolutions have influenced it, including the North American Revolution with its struggle for independence from the British colonial empire, and its struggle for equality. For the North American Revolution extended beyond the independence of the U.S. to the war that brought an end to slavery, and this has influenced our revolution. We are no strangers to Lincoln's thought, or the role played by Washington and Jefferson. The abolition of slavery did not bring an end to racial discrimination in the U.S.—as it logically should have—but the overcoming of slavery was nevertheless a revolutionary step. (I should mention that in 1856 a group of U.S. adventurers came to Nicaragua under the leadership of William Walker, a Southerner who sought to reimpose slavery in Nicaragua. But his intentions ran afoul of Nicaragua's own historical progress. There was no longer any place in Nicaraguan society for slavery.)

The liberal ideas of the North American people at that time had a profound influence on the development of other revolutions of that epoch. Democratic ideas emanating from the U.S. had a notable impact on democratic thought in Latin America. Unfortunately, there then followed the great economic expansion of the U.S., which came to express itself in political terms through an imperialism that has dominated this continent, rationalizing its actions through various theoretical strategems, such as the Monroe Doctrine and all of its corollaries.

**Andrew Reding** writes regularly for *Christianity and Crisis* and *World Policy Journal*.

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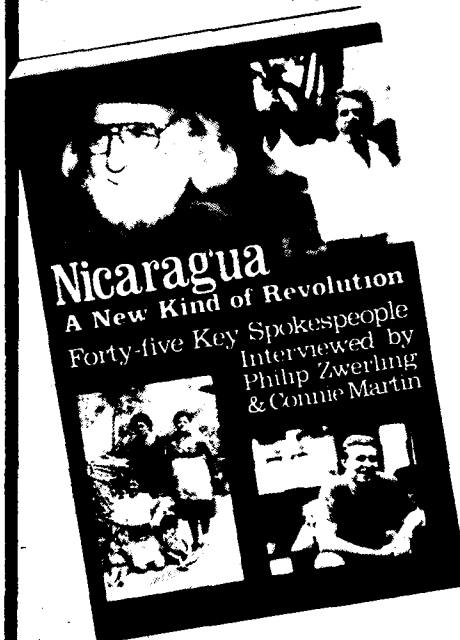
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# Comics

Continued from page 24

lation lightweight. Batman has slipped considerable since the days when he appeared twice weekly on national TV. As for Wonder Woman, Paul Levitz, DC's executive vice president, says, "The character has a tremendous impact. The comic book was always borderline at best."

Of late, DC has sold its characters more successfully than its comic books. "Comic books," says Levitz, "are a small industry. Superman is a monumental property."

DC's strength in selling characters for other products has increased since the company was bought out by Warner Communications, Inc., in the early '70s.

Unlike most magazines, comics don't make much money selling ads. Levitz partly blames the "bastard format," a physical set-up that requires agencies to design special ads for comics. But another factor is comics' peculiar audience—half kids, half college-bound teens and college-educated adults, and almost uniformly male. The kids buy between one and five titles a month at some 40 thousand comic racks in drug-stores, markets and convenience stores. The older people buy tens of comics monthly in some 3,000 comic specialty stores, up from about 100 outlets a decade ago. Both audiences are loyal, but comic publishers have so far managed to sell advertisers only the younger and less affluent one.

The older readers are commonly described as "sophisticated." They may buy DC and Marvel books, but they also snap up the products of small, independent publishers, comics laced with politics, social criticism, irony and self-parody. "The majority

of mail we get is typed," says Marv Wolfman. "It's literate. And they expect literate stories back." So Wolfman willingly distances himself from his creations, happily developing a popular character like the "right-wing fanatic" Vigilante, and pleased that conservative readers enjoy it. Comic heroes, he says, "should be honest to their beliefs, not to mine. Otherwise, they're all going to be New York, Jewish liberals. And that's ridiculous."

DC's current audience is loyal and has been growing steadily, since the time five years ago when a magazine that sold 100,000 copies was an unthinkable success. But DC hopes to open still larger markets by consolidating its position in the cultural mainstream. In 1983, Nancy Reagan joined the New Teen Titans in an anti-drug comic sponsored by the soft drink industry. Last year, Transportation Secretary Elizabeth Dole introduced a pro-seat-belt book backed by Honda featuring Supergirl. Both comics were distributed free in schools. DC and Marvel now share rack space in Walden book stores nationwide, a new sort of outlet for comics.

Peggy May, DC's public relations manager, wants to improve comic books' image in the popular press. She hopes to place articles in women's magazines, reminding moms that comics help kids learn to read. She plans to encourage parents to give out comics, not candy, on Halloween. All this should fit in nicely if, as rumored, DC follows Marvel's lead in introducing non-superhero books for younger readers.

DC would also like to regain the female readers it lost when it cancelled *Young Romance* in the early '70s. But how? There are rumors that romance books may return—an unusual notion for a firm that's been pushing Wonder Woman as a role model.

Meanwhile, a gender gap yawns between young females and DC superheroes. Although a few women have begun writing, drawing and editing for DC, even Peggy May admits she has trouble reading comic books. And it's worse for teenage girls, she says. "It's very intimidating," says May. "for a young girl to come into a store that's 90 percent male."

For men, however, the power of the DC universe persists. Paul Levitz tells a story about his brother-in-law, a fan of an old comic called *Challengers of the Unknown*. "Now, there's no real reason," he comments, "why anyone should remember the

*Challengers of the Unknown*. They never sold incredibly well. They never made a transition into any other medium in any important way. But for some reason, that particular strip had a terrific effect on him.

"You won't find an adult population of any size that will recognize *Amethyst*, a comic that's about two years old. But 10 years from now, you'll probably find a substantial number of people who remember it fondly. Nothing in proportion to the ones who'll recognize Superman, of course—but it has an impact."

**Russell Miller** is a New York journalist who specializes in business issues.

## CALENDAR

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#### September 20

*Before Stonewall: The Making of a Gay and Lesbian Community* makes its Midwest Premiere opening the Chicago Lesbian & Gay Film Festival at the Music Box Theater, 3733 N. Southport, 8:00 p.m. *Before Stonewall* is a comprehensive history of gay and lesbian life in the U.S. from the "demimode" of the 1920s up to the 1969 Stonewall riots. Director Greta Schiller will be present. For information (312) 329-0854.

#### October 4

"It's June in October." June LaVelle, of the Industrial Council of Northwest Chicago, will be the subject of the fifth annual benefit/roast of the Center for Neighborhood Technology on Friday, Oct. 4, 5:30 p.m., Midwest Com-

plex, 6 N. Hamlin, Chicago. Food, entertainment, cash bar and free escorted parking. Tickets \$25. Contact: Deborah Merchant, (312) 454-0126.

### WASHINGTON, DC

#### September 27

"The Road from Nairobi"—Arab-Jewish Dialog: Two Women's Perspectives. Reena Bernards, executive director, New Jewish Agenda and Yervat Hatem, assistant professor, Howard University, and Egyptian feminist, report from the recent Nairobi women's gathering. Sponsored by DC/Md DSA. 8:00 p.m., Machinists Hall, 1300 Connecticut Ave., NW. \$3 donation/\$1 low-income. Information: (202) 296-7693.

### INDIANA, PA

#### October 23-25

U.S. Working Class History and Contemporary Labor Movement Symposium. Keynotes: Melvyn Dubofsky and David Gordon. Speakers include Sean Wilentz, Celia Eckhardt, Leon Fink, Mari Jo Buhle, Philip Nyden, Nelson Lichtenstein, Alice Kessler-Harris, Everett Kassalow, Peter Kelly and Charles Bryan. Contact: Irwin Marcus, History Department, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA 15705, (412) 357-2227.

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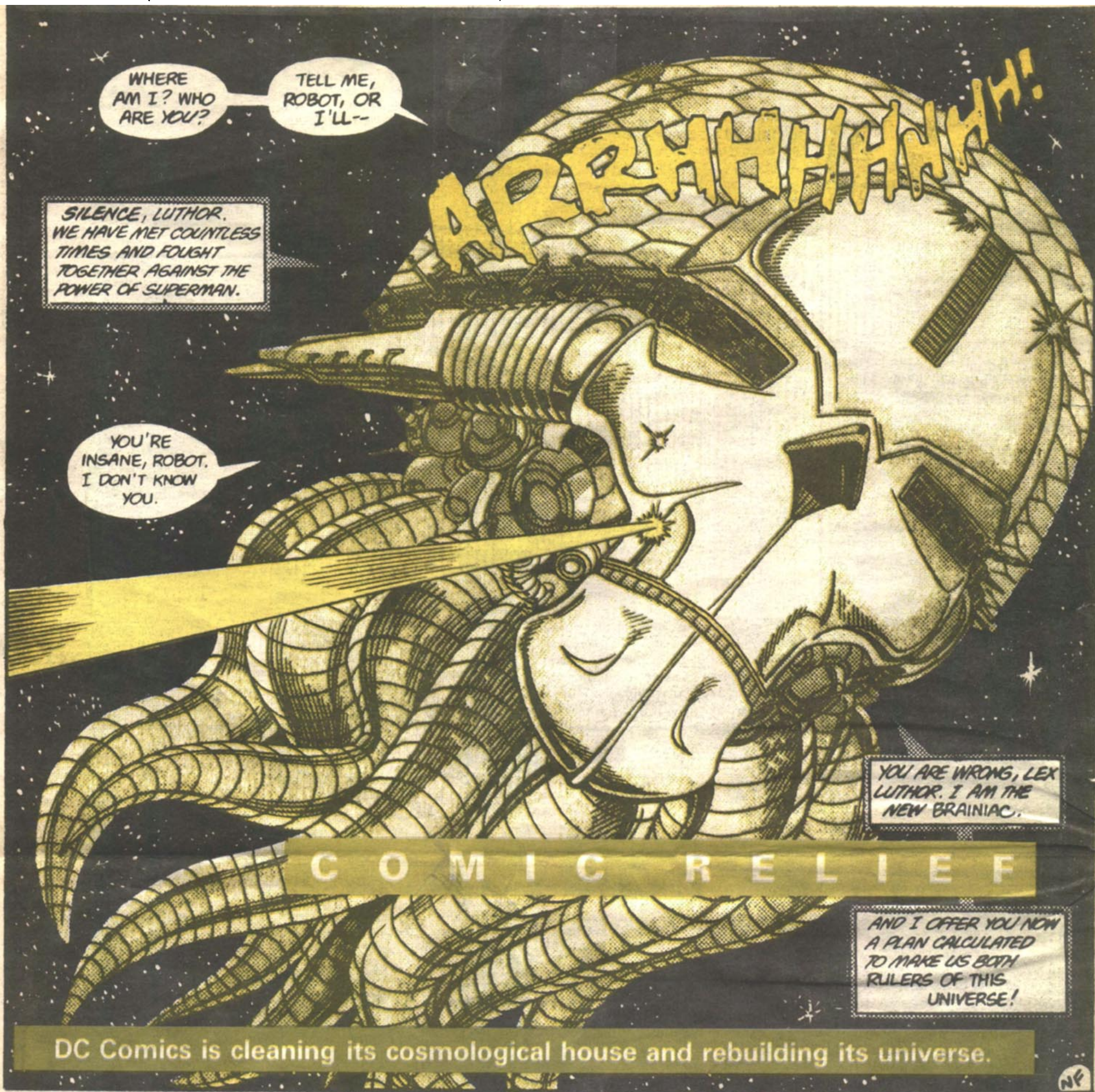
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By Russell Miller

**U**NIVERSES ARE DYING. Superheroes are dying. Still more will die. For years now, DC Comics—whose empire dominated comicdom until the mid-1960s—has been shivering at the brink of cosmic cognitive dissonance. Different comic books unfolded on different Earths, all under the DC Comics imprint. Characters invented in the 1940s co-existed with same-named, differently costumed characters from the '50s, '60s and '70s, not to mention their crystalline Bizarro counterparts.

DC played fast and loose with universes, creating new ones whenever it revived heroes of the past, developed new versions of old favorites or purchased characters from defunct competitors.

Everything was dandy as long as they stayed in their parallel universes, but what if they met? What if the Superman of today confronted the Superman of the future? Could Sup-erboy of yesteryear mediate?

"It was getting out of hand," says Marv Wolfman, the man whose mission it is to achieve what he calls "a logical rebuilding of the DC universe." Wolfman is the creator, editor,

writer and theorist of *Crisis On Infinite Earths*, the 12-part "maxi-series" through which, by December, DC will have cleaned its cosmological house.

*Crisis* will pare the DC universe down to a single Earth in an effort to make DC comics internally consistent and accessible to new readers. "There are some characters who are being killed," says Wolfman (who otherwise seems a nice enough fellow). "Other characters are retiring. But only one character who dies currently has his own magazine."

Candid about the imminent death of Supergirl, Wolfman turns cagey when asked to identify the doomed superstar. In the course of *In These Times*' investigation, a senior DC official confessed that it is the Flash, red-suited marathoner, who's slated to go the way of James Fixx.

Not all comic enthusiasts see *Crisis on Infinite Earths* as a solution to a logical problem. "It's all sales hype," says David Topf, owner of West Side Comics, a shop in Manhattan.

Indeed, *Crisis* has held a place for DC on the *Comic Dealers' Newsletter* top 10. It ranked third on the May '85 best-seller list. The other nine titles came from Marvel Comics Group, the upstart that stole DC's dominion almost 20 years ago with a pantheon of neurotic heroes, a continuing

soap-opera format and a chummy style that played up the personalities of the comics' creators.

Over the last few years, DC has cultivated a new image as innovative underdog—in large part by out-Marveling Marvel. In Marvel-style plot twists, Lois Lane has broken up with the commitment-wary Superman, Clark Kent has been fired from the *Daily Planet* and Wonder Woman's teenage sister has married a divorced gentleman. One new character, introduced in *Crisis*, achieves new heights of superhero neurosis. He shows up at one disaster after another, and all he can do is cry.

Marv Wolfman, who's responsible for five of the six DC comics on the May 1985 top 30, joined DC five years ago. He'd spent eight years at Marvel, including a stint as editor-in-chief. A number of Marvel writers and artists followed Wolfman to DC, attracted in part by a late-'70s change in DC's policy toward creative personnel. DC increased pay-per-page, introduced reprint royalties, and began paying creators a percentage of the profits their characters earned. The company flaunts its new-found respect for writers and artists by putting their names on comic covers—one-upping Marvel's policy of title-page credits.

*Crisis* brings together all DC's

heroes and villains. Wolfman says, and comic fans confirm, that he came up with the idea five years ago, but held it off until this year to celebrate DC's 50th anniversary. Nevertheless, Marvel scooped DC in February 1984 with *Secret Wars*, a mini-series uniting all of its own good guys and fiends. *Secret Wars* averaged 550,000 copies a month in an industry where 200,000-sellers, like *Crisis*, are considered blockbusters. *Secret Wars II*, a second Marvel series, began last month and leapfrogged past *Crisis* to the number one spot on the bestseller list.

Comic fans praise DC's consistent plotting and strong characters, but Marvel remains more popular. It may be a matter of demographics. "You read the comics you read when you were a kid," says Roger Smyth, clinical psychologist and owner of Funny Business, a Manhattan comics store. "As a person gets older, they will stick with that. That's primarily what DC is bucking—the baby boom of the late '60s and early '70s."

#### Sluggish Superman

DC's oldest and best-known superheroes are mediocre sellers. Superman, still slugging it out after 50 years, is a cultural icon but a circu-

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